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OF
Newington Green Church,
June, 1930.

THE RURAL LIFE OF ENGLAND:

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOOK OF THE SEASONS," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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CONTENTS.

VOLUME II.—PART I.

CHAPTER I.

Page

Love of the Sublime and Beautiful in Nature more eminently developed in Modern than in Classical Literature—The Fact striking, that the Love of Nature is so conspicuous in our Literature, more faint in that of the Continent, still more in that of the Ancients—This Affection only developed in proportion to the Intellectual Culture of our Nature—The same objects pursued in Art as in Literature, the Sublime and Beautiful—The Greek Poets more cognizant of the Amenities than the Sublimity of Nature—Homer the greatest Exception—Instances of his higher Perceptions—Hesiod nearly destitute of it—Theocritus most alive to the Picturesque—His Picture of the Two Fishermen, of King Amycus, of a Drinking-cup—His luxurious sense of Out-of-Door Enjoyment—Love of Nature amongst the Romans—One Cause of the continuance of their Simplicity of Life—Instanced in Virgil, Horace, and Cicero—Modern Literature a New World of Feeling and Sentiment—Difference between Longinus and Burke—Love of Nature in the Ancients, incidental—Ours a perpetual Affection—Instanced in Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron—Originating cause to be found in Christianity—Development of it in the Hebrew Literature—Completion of it in the Christian Revelation—Proofs of this - - - - - - - 1

CHAPTER II.

Development of the Love of the Country greater in English than in Continental Literature—Comparison of our Literature, in various Departments, with the Continental—German

Page

Literature kindred to the English—The Idylls of Voss—Testimony of a French Writer to our greater Love of Nature—The Influence of the Writings of John Wilson in Blackwood's Magazine, and of Bewick's Wood-cuts - - 26

CHAPTER III.

Influence of Wood-engraving on the Love of the Picturesque in the Country—Introduction of Stereotyping Wood-cuts in the Cheap Magazines—Probable Results from the Use of the Art—In what respects Wood is superior to Copper or Steel—Causes that prevent the Successors of Bewick equalling him in Knowledge of Nature—How this Defect is to be remedied - - - - - - - - - - 50

PART II.

THE FORESTS OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

The Forests of England—Our Forests amongst our most interesting Objects—Scenery of England as we may suppose it in the Feudal Ages, and as it is now—Charms with which our Imaginations and Town Restraints have invested the Feudal Times—Antiquity of our Forests—Derivation of the name—New Forest created by the Conqueror; Sixty-seven Forests previously existing—Various opinions respecting the Origin of New Forest—The Ravages of William, and the Death of his Two Sons and Grandson in it.—Number of Forests, Chases, and Parks formerly belonging to the Crown — Forest System an Imperium in Imperio — Its Courts, Laws, and Officers — Consequences of the few Judges, and long Intervals between Trials—Severity of both Laws and Oaths on the Officers—Freeholds granted in Forests subject to the Forest Laws—Forest-boundaries of a peculiar Description—Drifts of the Forest—Barbarous Penalties for killing Deer decreed by the Norman Kings—These softened by successive Monarchs—Preamble of the Assise of the Forest of Edward I.—Law of Attachment of Offenders in the Forest expressed in an old Rhyme—Lawing of Dogs; in what it consisted—Other curious Provisions of the Assises of the Forests—Regarders appointed by Henry II.—Their Duties—Inquisitions into the state of Forests by Elizabeth—The Forest Laws disused after the Revolution—List of the Ancient Forests - - - - 59

CHAPTER II.

Page

New Forest—Retains more of its Forest Character than any other—Boundaries now nearly the same as in Charles II's. time—Places in the Forest—Its Features as you pass through it—As compared with other Forests—Not the ruin of a Forest, but a Forest in its prime—The Cause of this—Picturesque Style of the Cottages and small Enclosures in its Neighbourhood—A Day's stroll through it by the Author—Feelings inspired by its Solitude and Air of Antiquity—Forest Farms, Swine, Cattle and their Bells—Spot where Rufus was killed, near Stony-Cross—The Descendants of Purkiss, who conveyed the Body of Rufus to Winchester—Tradition of the Cart-wheel—Gilpin's Parsonage and School—His Opinion of the Origin of the New Forest Horses—Wild Population of the Forest—Adventure of a Physician with them—Forest Walks and Lodges—Stirrup of Rufus preserved at Lyndhurst—The Forest Court a singular Scene, as described by Mr. Stewart Rose - - 83

CHAPTER III.

Sherwood Forest—In a very different state to New Forest—Celebrated as the Scene of Robin Hood's Exploits—The Norman Kings, especially John, fond of Hunting there—Formerly of great extent; containing Nottingham, Mansfield, Annesley, Newstead, etc.—Its Constitution and Affairs—Curious Fact regarding the Byrons and Chaworths—Present Extent of the Forest—Bilhaghe an unique and impressive Remains of a portion of it—Birkland a beautiful tract of Birch Woodland—Its Fairyland Character—Concluding Remarks - - - - - - - - - 99

CHAPTER IV.

Forest Enclosures—Injuries to the Arts, Manufactures, and the Intellectual Taste of the Public to be apprehended from such Enclosures—Logic of Lawyers and Land-surveyors—Open Lands needed for Public Enjoyment—That Open Lands are Unproductive, shewn to be a very false notion—Unchristian principle on which Enclosures have been conducted—Enclosures inimical to our National Interests—Numbers who seek the refreshment of Summer Visits to our Forests, Coasts, Moors, and Mountains—The Utilitarian Enclosures of certain Lands recommended - - - - - 110

CHAPTER V.

Wild English Cattle—Places where they still exist—Bewick's Description of them—The Author's Visit to Chillingham Park in 1836, to see the great Herd - - - - 119

PART III.

HABITS, AMUSEMENTS, AND CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

Page

Cottage Life—Wide space between the Life of the Hall and that of the Cottage—The Routine of the Labourer's Life—A Blow aimed at his Domestic Security—A Highland Hut—A Night passed in one—Abodes of Poverty called Rookeries—The Beauty of English Cottages in some parts of England—A Thought on seeing such by Professor Wilson—Delightfulness of some of the Cottages of the Wealthy and Refined 126

CHAPTER II.

Popular Festivals and Festivities—Sketch of their History—Of Catholic origin—The great Change in the Public Taste regarding them traced to the Reformation — Subsequent co-operating Causes pointed out—The Intellectual Character of the Popular Taste still Progressive - - - 142

CHAPTER III.

May-Day Festivities—Formerly celebrated with more Gaiety than any others—Came down from Pagan Antiquity in all their Arcadian Beauty—It was the Festival of the Poets—None now more entirely obsolete — Washington Irving's Delight at seeing Plough-bullocks and May-poles in the Neighbourhood of Newstead—Great Decline of these things during the last Thirty Years even there—A few May-poles still to be found in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire—May-dances quite gone by—May-day celebrated with enthusiasm by the Poets—European observance of May derived from the Roman Festival of Flora—Saxon Customs of this period of the Year—Druid Customs—Blowing of Horns at Oxford and other places—Custom mentioned by Erasmus, of placing a Deer's Horns on St. Paul's Altar—Custom of the Hindus—Beltane in Ireland and Scotland—May-feast of Northumberland—Fishing for the Wedding-ring—Roman Feast of Flora imitated in France and England—Various Additions here of Robin Hood, Maid Marian, Friar Tuck, etc.—Spenser and Herrick's description of May-day Festivities—Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and James I.'s going a-Maying—Sheriffs and Aldermen of London going a-Maying—Congratulated by Lydgate the Poet—In 1644, all May-poles pulled down—In 1654 Maying again, in presence of the Lord Protector—Great May-pole in the Strand raised again at the Restoration—Aubrey's Account of the May-booms in Holland—Complaints of Aubrey and Evelyn of Injury done to the Woods by Mayers—May Customs that yet remain - - 152

CHAPTER IV.

Page

Easter Festivities—May the Festival of the Young, Easter that of the Church—Celebration of Easter in Catholic Countries—Royal distribution of Alms on Maunday Thursday at Whitehall, still kept up—Easter at Moscow, Jerusalem, Rome, and other Places—Eating Hot-cross-buns, and going to Church the sole remaining Ceremonies in England—Easter Morning as described by Goethe—Strange Plays acted in Churches by the Monks at Easter—Churchwardens' Accounts at Reading for such Expenses—Paschal Lights—Lighting the Annual Fire at the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem—Easter Customs in various Countries—Paschal Eggs—Peculiar Privileges attached to their Presentation in Russia—Courts shut, and Business suspended formerly in London—Still a time of great Recreation to Mechanics there—Less observed in Country Towns—Pace-Eggs still given in some Countries—Heaving, or Lifting—Ball-Play - - - - - - - - - - 166

CHAPTER V.

Whitsuntide Festivities—Sole Religious Festival that continues a Popular one—This partly owing to Friendly Societies—Joyous Aspect of this Village Fete—Whitsuntide Village Processions as seen by the Author in his Youth—Fine subject for a Painter—These Love Feasts of the People very appropriate to this Period, being that of the AGAPAI, or Love Feasts of the early Christians—Objections to their being held at Public Houses—This remediable—Whitsuntide as witnessed at Warsop in Nottinghamshire—Concluding Remarks - - - - - - - - - 183

CHAPTER VI.

Christmas Festivities—The Festival of the Fireside—Its Ancient Usages made familiar by our Popular Writers—Burton's Account of Christmas Games—Withers' Poetical Description of Christmas 200 years ago—Scott's View of them as seen in the past—Pageants at this season in Catholic Countries, as at Rome, Naples, and in Spain—Interesting Domestic Custom in Germany—Christmas as now passed by the Poor, and by the Middle and Higher Classes—The Waits—Christmas Visiting and Country Games—Christmas Carols, as sung about Manchester, collected by the late Miss Jewsbury—Christmas Customs still kept up—George and the Dragon—Blessing Orchards, etc.—Concluding Remarks on the Present State of the Popular Festivals - 192

CHAPTER VII.

The Fairy Superstitions—Fairies all vanished from the Country—Gone in Chaucer's Days—Bishop Corbett's Farewell to them—Hogg their last Poet—Fairies of Caldon-Low—

Page

Made Immortal by Milton and Shakspeare—Belief of them yet lingering in Wales—Robin Goodfellow and the Lubber-fiend of Milton thrown out of Employ by the Thrashing-Machine—Fairies' Waterfall at Aberpergum—Morgan Lewis, the Neath Guide's account of their positive Departure - - - - - - - - - - - - 219

CHAPTER VIII.

The Village Inn—The Old-fashioned Village Inn a very different place to the New Beer-Shop—Its General Aspect—Its Old Tree—Remarkable Tree of this kind at the Golden Grove, near Chertsey—The Country Inn Kitchen—Description of Landlords by which such Inns are kept—Their Cleanness and Rural Plenty—Patronised by all Classes, from the Squire downwards—Humorous Characters often found there—Curious Scene once witnessed by the Author at a Country Inn in Yorkshire—The New Beer-Shops a universal Nuisance - - - - - - - - - 228

CHAPTER IX.

Popular Places of Resort—Wakes, Statutes, and Fairs—The Wake, the Feast of the Dedication of the Parish Church, now dwindled into a Village Holiday—Anticipation of it by the Rural People—Wake Festivities—The Wake, in some places yet connected with Church-rites.—Statutes: Meetings by Legal Statute for the Hiring of Servants—Attendance of Farmers, their Wives, and Men and Women Servants—Their Appearance—Shepherds, Ploughmen, Milkmaids, and their Insignia—Earnest Money—Afternoon Jollification—In the Northern Counties the Bondage-girls hired at similar Meetings.—Fairs: Places of both Business and Pleasure to all classes of Country People—Nottingham great October, or Goose Fair taken as a specimen—Preparations for its Attendance—Fair Scenery and Characters—Proclamation of the Fair—Corporation Procession—Gig Fair—Peculiar Tastes and Pleasures of Fair-goers—Good subjects for the Painter presented - - 245

CHAPTER X.

Sports and Pastimes of the People—History of their Changes and Present State—Sports generated by the Feudal Habits—Sports introduced by the Catholic Church—The mere Brutal portion of both these remaining in the last Century—Many of these now abolished, and a better class encouraged—Sports and Pastimes prevalent in Farming Districts and obscure Hamlets—Prevalence of Cricket—Description of a Cricket-Match between Nottingham and the Sussex Club—Auguries drawn from the present Popular Taste - - - - - - - - - - - 257

CHAPTER XI.

Page

WRESTLING: its History and present Practice—This Exercise formerly so general, now confined to a few Counties—Cornwall and Devon, Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmorland—these Counties possessing Practices peculiar to themselves—Grand Annual Wrestling in Clerkenwell, formerly attended by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London—Curious Anecdote of a Minister of the Society of Friends of that day—West of England and Westmorland and Cumberland Clubs in London—Attempt of Sir Thomas Parkyn to establish Wrestling in Nottinghamshire—Cornish Wrestling—Fuller's Opinion of it—Account of it by an Eye-witness—Champions of Cornwall and Devon—Games established at St. Ives in Cornwall by John Knill—The Canns of Dartmoor, and Widdicombs of the Moors—Description of a Match at the Eagle Tavern Green, City Road, in 1826, between Devon and Cornwall - - - - 279

CHAPTER XII.

Favourite Pursuits of English Cottagers and Workmen—The Genius of the Working Class—Its Effects on the Happiness of that Class—Almost every Man his Hobby—Pigeon-fanciers, Dog-fanciers, Lovers of Music, Singing, Bell-ringing, Poaching, Bird-stuffing, Bird-catching—A Caveat against kidnapping of Nightingales—Interior of a Bird-catcher's House—Anecdote of a Bird-catcher—Angling, its effect on the Spirits—Lovers of Gardens and Bees—Anecdote of a Bee-lover and the Abbess of Caverswall—Florists—Entomologists—Crabbe's Description of some known to him—Artizans' Gardens—Account of 5000 of these at Nottingham—Happiness to be diffused through the Working-class by sound Legislation - - - - - - - 293

CHAPTER XIII.

Sunday in the Country—Goethe's Description of a Sunday in Germany—Applicable in a great degree to Sunday here—Trip to Richmond by the Steamer, and its result—Passing of Sunday by many Inhabitants of large Towns—The Street Preacher—The Sailor's Chapel—The Irvingite Street-preacher—A Camp-meeting—Profound Air of Repose in the Country on this day—The Farmer and his Household—Groups going Churchward—The Country Church a place congenial to Worship—Social Pleasures of Sunday Evening—Millions who enjoy the Blessings of a day of Rest—Holy Influence of Sunday—Evening Walk - - - 312

CHAPTER XIV.

Cheap Pleasures of Country Life—No great Events needed by the Lover of Nature to render him happy—Recollections of early Delight in the Country—Objects of Pleasurable Observation as they present themselves in the course of the

Page

Seasons — Splendid Pictures presented by Nature — The Spirit of Peace and Gladness inspired by Nature, which renders so delightful the Writings of White, Evelyn, Walton, etc.—Testimonies of Coleridge and Sir Henry Wotton to the profound Satisfaction to be found in Country Life - 338

CHAPTER XV.

Lingering Customs — Rapid disappearance of Old English Customs—The Beautiful custom of Hanging Garlands in Village Churches at the Funerals of Young Maidens nearly extinct—Character of the Primitive Times lingers in the Village Church—Old-fashioned Congregations— Genuine old Village Clerk—Circumstances occurring to the Author in Village Churches—Their Superstitions—Village notions of Angels and Cherubims—Country Customs at Funerals —Closing of Churchyards of late years—Richard Howitt's Remarks on this practice—What Education is doing, and leaving undone in the Poetry of Village Life—Peculiar Social Condition of Surrey—Its Effect on the Peasantry— Need of Schools—Mr. Allen's School of Industry at Lindfield in Sussex - - - - - - - - - 348

CHAPTER XVI.

Concluding Chapter—An extensive Observation of our own Country recommended—Every part presents some variety of Beauty, Custom, or other Object worthy of notice— Some of these to be found on a Summer's Route from London to Devon and Cornwall—Others in Routes of the Solitary Pedestrian through the Western, Midland, and Northern Counties—The wide growth of the Spirit of Enjoyment in such Excursions—Numbers which throng to all our Places of Natural Beauty, or Historic Interest—Concluding Remarks - - - - - - - - - - - 369

PART I.

CAUSES OF THE STRONG ATTACHMENT OF THE ENGLISH TO COUNTRY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOVE OF THE SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE MORE EMINENTLY DEVELOPED IN MODERN LITERATURE THAN IN THE CLASSICAL.

One of the most conspicuous features of English literature, is that intense love of the sublime and beautiful in Nature, which pervades, with a living spirit, the works of our poets; gives so peculiar a charm to the writings of our naturalists; possesses great prominence in our travellers; is mingled with the fervent breathings of our religious treatises; and

even finds its way into the volumes of our philosophy. If we look into the literature of the Continental nations, we find it existing there, more or less, but in a lower tone than in our own; if we look back into that of the ancients, we find it there too, but still fainter, more confined in its scope, and scattered, as it were, into distant and isolated spots. I think nothing can be more striking than the truth of this; and it is a curious matter of observation, that there should be this great distinction, and of inquiry whence it has arisen. The love of the beauty and sublimity of Nature is an inherent principle in the human soul; but like all other of our finer qualities, it is later in its development than the common ones, and requires, not repression, but fostering and cultivation. It is like the love of the fine arts; it slumbers in the bosom that passes through life in its native rudeness. It lies in the unploughed ground of the human mind,—a seed buried below the influence that alone can call it into activity.

> Yes, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea;
> Like the man's thoughts, dark in the infant brain;
> Like aught that is, which wraps what is to be;

there it lies, deep in the soil of common events and cares, and untouched by the divine atmosphere of knowledge which a more easy and advanced condition brings with it. In others, it is partially vivified, but cannot flourish; it is choked with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches; but in minds that are fed with substantial knowledge, and have their intellectual power reached, and their affections kindled by the blessedness of refined and Christian culture,—

then it grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength. It daily enlarges its grasp, and its appetite; it expands perpetually the circle of its horizon. The love of the fine arts, is but a modification of this great passion. Their objects are the same—the sublime and the beautiful; and the same purity and elevation of taste accompany them both. This is the original and legitimate passion. In our love of the fine arts, our attention is occupied with human imitations of what is beautiful in nature;—in this, we fix our admiration at once on the magnificent works of the Great Artist of the Universe.

We might, therefore, reasonably expect to find in the literature of the ancients, what is actually the case, a less refined, less expanded, less penetrating and absorbing existence of this affection. Everywhere the love of nature must exist. In all ages and all countries, so is the outward universe framed to influence the inward, that men must be impressed by the grandeur of creation, and attracted by its beauty, so far as the human is at all advanced beyond the limits of mere animal existence. But in the ancient world education was never popular; it extended only to a few; and of these few, a majority were occupied in the pursuits of art, or the speculations of philosophy; and poetry, and especially the poetry of nature, had scanty followers. The great poets of all ages, even of those but semi-civilized, must necessarily have minds so sensitive to the influence of all kinds of beauty that they could not help being alive to that of nature; and this was the case with the great poets of Greece. We put out of the present question the dramatic and lyrical ones; for to them the passions and interests of

men were the engrossing objects; but in Homer, Hesiod, and Theocritus we may fairly expect to discover the amount of the ancients' perception of natural beauty, and their love of it. But in these how far is it behind what it is in the moderns. They were often enraptured with the pleasantness of nature, but it was seldom with more than its pleasantness. Their Elysian Fields are composed of flowery meads, with pleasant trees and running waters, where the happy spirits led a life of luxurious repose. Their celebrated Arcadia is faithfully described in such Idyllia as those of Bion and Moschus;—youths and damsels feeding their flocks amid the charms of a pastoral country, to whose beauties they were alive in proportion as they ministered to luxurious enjoyment. Beyond this they seldom looked;—seldom described the sublime aspects and phenomena of the universe. Homer, indeed, is the greatest exception,—his soul was cast in a mighty mould. His beautiful description of a moonlight night is known to all readers. He speaks too, of the splendour of the starry heavens; and he describes tempests with great majesty; but this rather as they are terrible in their effects on men, than as sublime in themselves. Minds even of the noblest class had not arrived at that full comprehension of nature which sees sublimity in the gloom and terror of tempests, independent of their effects; the grandeur of beauty in desolation itself; in splintered mountains, wild wildernesses, and the awfulness of solitude. They had not become tremblingly alive to all the lesser traces and shades of beauty in the face of nature, for they had not reached either of the extremities of perception —the vast on one hand—minute perfection on the

other. They did not pursue the forms of beauty into leaf and flower; into the cheerful culture of the field, or the brown tinges of the desert. They did not watch the growing, or fading lights of the sky, and the colours, as they lived or died on the distant mountain tops; — the passing of light and shadow over earth and ocean. Their acquaintance with the subtle spirit of the universe had not become so intimate. They abode most in the general; they admired in the mass; for they had not arrived at the refinement of very delicate, or extensive analysis; and they did not go out to admire as the moderns; their admiration of nature was not advanced, as with us, into an art and a passion. Beauty rather fell upon their senses than was inquired after. They were pleased, and did not always seek out the operative causes of their sensations. Their mention of their delight was, therefore, generally incidental. They were in the condition and state of mind of the old man in Wordsworth's ballad, who says—

> Think you, mid all this mighty sum
> Of things for ever speaking,
> That nothing of itself will come,
> But we must still be seeking?

That Homer had an eye for the sublime features of earth, the nobler forms of animal life, and phenomena of nature, his bold and beautiful similies, scattered all through the Iliad, of storms, of overflowing rivers, of forests on flame, of the lion, the horse, and others, sufficiently testify; that he had a most exquisite sense of the picturesque, is shewn in almost every page of the Odyssey; in the cave of Polypheme, in good old

king Laertes occupied in his farm; and in the whole episode of Ulysses at the lodge of Eumeus, the goatherd. But yet it is, after all, only in contemplating some scene of delicious rural beauty, something akin to Arcadian sweetness, that he breaks out into anything like a rapture. The abode of Calypso, as seen by Hermes on his approach to it, is an exact instance.

Then, swift ascending from the azure wave,
He took the path that winded to the cave.
Large was the grot in which the nymph he found,
The fair-haired nymph, with every beauty crowned.
She sate and sung; the rocks resound the lays;
The cave was brightened with the rising blaze;
Cedar and frankincense, an odorous pile,
Flamed on the hearth, and wide perfumed the isle,
While she with work and song the time divides,
And through the loom the golden shuttle guides.
Without the grot a various sylvan scene
Appeared around, and groves of living green;
Poplars and alders, ever quivering, played,
And nodding cypress formed a grateful shade;
On whose high branches, waving with the storm,
The birds of broadest wing their mansion form;
The chough, the sea-mew, and loquacious crow,
And scream aloft, and skim the deeps below.
Depending vines the delving caverns screen,
With purple clusters blushing through the green.
Four limpid fountains from the clefts distil;
And every fountain forms a separate rill,
In mazy, winding wanderings down the hill:
Where bloomy meads with vivid greens were crowned,
And glowing violets threw odours round—
A scene, where if a god should cast his sight,
A god might gaze and wander with delight!
Joy touched the messenger of heaven; he stayed
Entranced, and all the blissful haunt surveyed.

Odyssey, B. v.

In Hesiod, the perception of even the delights of

the summer field were far fainter. Though he fed his flock at the foot of Mount Helicon, he has little to say in praise of its aspect; and though he gives you great insight into the state of agriculture, and the simple mode of life of the country people, a very few verses furnish almost all the praise of nature which he had to bestow. His mind seemed occupied in tracing the genealogy of the gods, and framing grave maxims for the regulation of human conduct.

Of all the Greek writers, Theocritus is the one that luxuriates most in natural beauty. His sense of the picturesque is keen, and his pencilling of such subjects is most vigorous and graphic. His two fishermen remind us of Crabbe; nothing can be more exquisite.

> Two ancient fishers in a straw-thatched shed—
> Leaves were their walls, and sea-weed was their bed,
> Reclined their weary limbs; hard by were laid
> Baskets and all their implements of trade;
> Rods, hooks, and lines composed of stout horse-hairs,
> And nets of various sorts, and various snares,
> The seine, the cast-net, and the wicker maze,
> To waste the watery tribe a thousand ways;
> A crazy boat was drawn upon a plank;
> Mats were their pillow, wove of osiers dank;
> Skins, caps, and coats, a rugged covering made;
> This was their wealth, their labour and their trade.
> No pot to boil, no watch-dog to defend,
> Yet blessed they lived with penury their friend;
> None visited their shed, save, every tide,
> The wanton waves that washed its tottering side.
>
> *Idyl.* xxi.

Then again, nothing can be more picturesque, nothing more boldly graphic and solemnly poetical, than the situation in which he makes Castor and

Pollux find Anycus, the king of Bebrycia; nothing more striking than the image of that chief.

> Meanwhile, the royal brothers devious strayed
> Far from the shore, and sought the cooling shade.
> Hard by, a hill with waving forests crowned,
> Their eyes attracted; in the dale they found
> A spring perennial in a rocky cave:
> Full to the margin flowed the lucid wave;
> Below small fountains gushed, and murmuring near,
> Sparkled like silver, and as silver clear.
> Above, tall pines and poplars quivering played,
> And planes and cypress in dark greens arrayed;
> Around balm-breathing flowers of every hue,
> The bees' ambrosia, in the meadows grew.
> There sate a chief, tremendous to the eye,
> His couch the rock, his canopy the sky;
> The gauntlet's strokes his cheeks and ears around,
> Had marked his face with many a desperate wound.
> Round as a globe, and prominent his chest,
> Broad was his back, but broader was his breast;
> Firm was his flesh, with iron sinews fraught,
> Like some Colossus on an anvil wrought.
>
> *Id.* xxii.

His description of an ancient drinking-cup appears to me to have no rival in all the round of literature, ancient or modern, except Keats' description of an antique vase. It is life and beauty itself. The figures stand out in bold relief, cut with an energy and precision most wonderful, and with a grace that makes itself felt to the very depths of the spirit.

> A deep, two-handled cup, whose brim is crowned
> With ivy, joined with helichryse around;
> Small tendrils with close-clasping arms uphold
> The fruit rich speckled with the seeds of gold.
> Within, a woman's well-wrought image shines,
> A vest her limbs, her locks a cawl confines;
> And near, two neat-curled youths in amorous strains,
> With fruitless strife communicate their pains;

Smiling, by turns she views the rival pair;
Grief swells their eyes, their heavy hearts despair.
Hard by, a fisherman, advanced in years,
On the rough margin of a rock appears;
Intent he stands to enclose the fish below,
Lifts a large net, and labours with the throw;
Such strong expression rises on the sight,
You'd swear the man exerted all his might;
For his round neck with turgid veins appears—
In years he seems, yet not impaired by years.
A vineyard next with intersected lines,—
And red, ripe clusters load the bending vines.
To guard the fruit a boy sits idly by,
In ambush near, two skulking foxes lie;
This, plots the branches of ripe grapes to strip,
And that, more daring, meditates the scrip;
Resolved, ere long, to seize the savoury prey,
And send the youngster dinnerless away;
Meanwhile on rushes all his art he plies,
In framing traps for grashoppers and flies;
And earnest only on his own designs,
Forgets his satchel, and neglects his vines.

Id. i.

What a glorious subject would this be for one of our modern sculptors. Were I one, I would not lose an hour ere I attempted it.

But in Theocritus, as in Homer, they are Arcadian amenities that engross almost all his passion for nature. They are flowery fields, running waters, summer shades, and the hum of bees; all the elements of voluptuous dreaming and indolent entrancement; the most delicious of all idleness, lying abroad with the blue sky above you, and the mossy turf beneath you, and the bubble of running waters, and the whisper of forest branches near, to lull you to repose. Is it not so? When is it that he invites you to out-of-door enjoyment?

Now when meridian beams inflame the day;
Now when green lizards in the hedges lie;
And crested larks forsake the fervid sky.
Id. vii.

And whither would he lead you at this sultry, blazing hour? Ah! hear him!

Here rest we: lo! cyperus decks the ground,
Oaks lend their shade, and sweet bees murmur round
Their honeyed hives; here, two cool fountains spring;
Here merrily the birds on branches sing;
Here pines in clusters more umbrageous grow,
Wave high their heads, and scatter cones below.
Id v.

Ah! cunning Sicilian! well didst thou know where life shed its most delicious dreams. Anacreon at his wine, and Tibullus in the rapture of one of his sweetest love-visions, was a novice in true enjoyment to thee. Hark! to the very sounds which he conjures up! There is nothing startling—nothing exciting.—No! there is enough of excitement already in the climate, in the summer heat, in the very scenes and persons from whose city revels he has just withdrawn. The true secret now is, to summon up only images of luxurious rest; of calm beauty; of refreshing coolness; that the blood, already running riot, may flow in the veins like the nectar of the gods, and send up to the brain images and trains of images of the very poetry of Elysium. Hark to the sounds about you!

Sweet low the herds along the pastured ground;
Sweet is the vocal reed's melodious sound;
Sweet pipes the jocund herdsman.

But I will give one more extract from him, which seems to combine all the fascinations he loved to paint as existing in the summer woodlands.

He courteous bade us on soft beds recline,
Of lentesch and young branches of the vine;
Poplars and elms above their foliage spread,
Lent a cool shade, and waved the breezy head.
Below, a stream, from the nymphs' sacred cave,
In free meanders led its murmuring wave;
In the warm sunbeams, verdant shrubs among,
Shrill grashoppers renewed their plaintive song;
At distance far, concealed in shades alone,
The nightingale poured forth her tuneful moan:
The lark, the goldfinch, warbled lays of love,
And sweetly pensive cooed the turtle-dove;
While honey-bees, for ever on the wing,
Hummed round the flowers, and sipped the silver spring.
The rich, ripe season gratified the sense
With summer's sweets and autumn's redolence.
Apples and pears lay strewed in heaps around,
And the plum's loaded branches kissed the ground.

Id. vii.

Well, we must pass over from the Greeks to the Romans, and I have found it so difficult to escape from Theocritus, that we must make short work of it here. Of Cicero, Seneca, the Plinys,—I will say nothing. We all know how they delighted in their country villas and gardens. We all know how Cicero, in his Treatise on Old Age, has declared his fondness for farming; and how, between his pleadings in the Forum, he used to seek the refreshment of a walk in a grove of plane-trees. We know how, during the best ages of the Commonwealth, their generals and dictators were brought from the plough and their country retreats—a fine feature in the Roman character, and one which may, in part, account for their so long retaining the simplicity of their tastes, and that high tone of virtue which generally accompanies a daily intercourse with the spirit of nature. All this

we know; but what is still more remarkable is, that Horace and Virgil, two of the most courtly poets that ever existed, yet were both passionately fond of the country, and perpetually declare in their writings that there is nothing in the splendour and fascinations of city life, to compare with the serene felicity of a rural one. Horace is perpetually rejoicing over his Sabine farm; and Virgil has, in his Georgics, described all the rural economy of the age with a gusto that is felt in every line. His details fill us with admiration at the great resemblance of the science of these matters at that time, and at this. With scarcely an exception, in all modes of rural management, in all kinds of farming stock—sheep, cattle, and horses, he would be now pronounced a consummate judge; and his rules for the culture of fields and gardens, would serve for studies here, notwithstanding the difference of the Italian and English climates. But it is only in that celebrated passage beginning—

> O fortunatos nimiùm, sua si bona nôrint,
> Agricolas!

in his second Georgic, so often quoted, that he seems to get into a rapture when contemplating the charms of a country life. We may take this as a sufficient example, and as very delightful in itself.

> Oh happy, if he knew his happy state,
> The swain who free from business and debate,
> Receives his easy food from Nature's hand,
> And just returns of cultivated land.
> No palace with a lofty gate he wants,
> To admit the tide of early visitants,
> With eager eyes, devouring as they pass,
> The breathing figures of Corinthian brass;

No statues threaten from high pedestals,
No Persian arras hides his homely walls
With antic vests, which, through their shadowy fold,
Betray the streaks of ill-dissembled gold.
He boasts no wool where native white is dyed
With purple poison of Assyrian pride.
No costly drugs of Araby defile,
With foreign scents, the sweetness of his oil:
But easy quiet, a secure retreat,
A harmless life that knows not how to cheat,
With home-bred plenty the rich owner bless,
And rural pleasures crown his happiness.
Unvexed with quarrels, undisturbed by noise,
The country king his peaceful realm enjoys.

* * * *

Ye sacred Muses! with whose beauty fired,
My soul is ravished, and my brain inspired—
Whose priest I am, whose holy fillets wear—
Would you your poet's first petition hear;
Give me the ways of wandering stars to know,
The depths of heaven above, and earth below.

* * * *

But if my heavy blood restrain the flight
Of my free soul, aspiring to the height
Of nature, and unclouded fields of light—
My next desire is, void of care and strife,
To lead a soft, secure, inglorious life—
A country cottage near a crystal flood,
A winding valley, and a lofty wood.
Some god conduct me to the sacred shades
Where Bacchanals are sung by Spartan maids;
Or lift me high to Hemus' hilly crown,
Or in the plains of Tempe lay me down,
Or lead me to some solitary place,
And cover my retreat from human race.

Turn now to the modern world of literature; and what a blaze of light, what a warmth, what a spirit, what a passion bursts upon us! We step, indeed, into a new world. All here is glowing, clear in view, tender in feeling; full of a new, profound, popular,

and yet domestic sentiment,—a sentiment befitting "the large utterance of the early gods," and yet hallowing and making more brotherly the bosoms of men. We are, in fact, as far advanced beyond the ancients in our knowledge of nature, as we are in that of "the life and immortality brought to light by the gospel." With all the admiration of the ancients for the loveliness of nature, with all their enjoyment of its amenities, what is there in them like the hungering and thirsting, the yearning after her, of such hearts as those of Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and a thousand other lights of modern literature? The mighty difference is, indeed, most strikingly manifested by comparing Longinus and Burke. The Palmyrian secretary, amongst his five sources of the sublime, does not even include the influence of natural objects. His treatise is, indeed, more truly a treatise on writing strongly and elegantly, than on the sublime. Like the poets, he perceives the amenities of the country; but there is only one passage in his whole work in which he speaks out plainly of the sublimity of external nature. "The impulse of nature inclines to admire not a little transparent rivulet that ministers to our necessities; but the Nile, the Ister, the Rhine, or still more, the Ocean. We are never surprised at the sight of a small fire that burns clearly, and blazes out on our private hearth; but view with amaze the celestial fires, though they are often obscured by vapours and eclipses. Nor do we reckon anything in nature more wonderful than the boiling furnaces of Etna, which cast out stones, and sometimes whole rocks from their labouring abyss, and pour out whole rivers of liquid and unmingled flame."

See how Burke has expanded and worked out this glimpse of the true view. He is full of the mighty influence of Nature's sublime features. Her heights and depths, her horrors and glooms, the demonstrations of her grandeur and power in storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes. Infinity and Eternity are all before him in their awful majesty, and furnish him with some of his deepest sources and most splendid illustrations of the sublime.

But the fact must be evident to every one. A single glance from the ancients to the moderns, and what a contrast! Throughout all the writings of the most enthusiastic ancients, where are the burning, passionate longings after nature that are transfused through all our modern literature? Nature is not with us a thing incidentally alluded to,—a thing to be voluptuously enjoyed when we find ourselves in the flowery lap of May; ours is a living, permeating, perpetual affection. We seek after communion with her as one of the highest enjoyments of our existence; we seek it to soothe the ruffling of our spirits; to calm our world-vexed hearts; to fill us with the divine presence and overshadowing of beauty. The love of her is with us as a daily attraction; the knowledge of her a daily pursuit: we have advanced her cognizance and admiration into a science. Our naturalists feel the breathings of a celestial spirit come from her secret shrines, even while they are seeking after and arranging her lesser forms and productions. Our romance writers dip their pens in her hues to cast a fascination upon their narratives; and our travellers climb every mountain, traverse every sea, explore every distant region, to catch fresh

glimpses of her beauty. True, many of these may not, and do not, feel all the attachment they profess—there are thousands who do but affect it, as they do any other fashion; but their very imitation, and their very number, do homage to the great worship of the age.

But it is through our poetry that the admiration of nature is diffused as one great soul. From Chaucer to the most recent poet, it is the universal spirit. It would seem a contradiction now, to say that a man is a poet, but that he has no ardent feeling for nature. In fact, a new language, a new kind of inspiration, distinguish the modern poets from the ancients altogether. Great as each may respectively be, their object, their vision, and their tone in this particular are widely opposed. When do we find one of the classical writers, speaking thus of his youth?

> Like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Wherever nature led; more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then,
> To me was all in all—I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite, a feeling, and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed of the eye.—*Wordsworth.*

We should be startled to hear an ancient exclaim, like Shelley:

> Magnificent!
> How glorious art thou earth! And if thou be

The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be,
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth. Wonderful!

What would be our astonishment, if we were to stumble, in an ancient poet, upon stanzas like these?

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture; I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean or the stars, mingle and not in vain.

And thus I am absorbed, and this is life!
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife
Where for some sin, to sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

And when, at length, the mind shall all be free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is what it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought, the spirit of each spot,
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? Shall I not contemn

> All objects, if compared with these? and stem
> A tide of suffering, rather than forego
> Such feelings, for the hard and worldly phlegm
> Of those whose eyes are only turned below,
> Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts that dare not glow?

To quote all that bears evidence of this wonderful revolution in the very heart of literature would be, not to quote indeed, but to take the whole mass of modern poetry. Powerfully as the spirit of the ancients was attracted by the sublimity of mortal passion and mortal fortunes; by the strife of families and nations, by the strife of emotions in the soul, and the out-bursting of a blasting or a beneficent sublimity in the deeds of men; and magnificent as are the monuments of tragic or heroic grandeur they have erected on this foundation,—so powerfully is the spirit of the moderns drawn, excited, and inflamed by the sublimity of nature, and beautiful and endearing are the strains it has elicited. And whence is this mighty change? Ay, that is the question. Whence is it that the love of Nature has, in the latter ages, become so much more passionate, intense, engrossing, refined, elevated, etherealized? Is it because we see nature with different eyes? Is it that we see something in it that the classics did not? It is! It is to that omnipotent principle that has so utterly changed the whole system of human philosophy, morals, politics, literature, and social life—the hopes, the fortunes, the reasonings of men, that we owe it. IT IS TO CHRISTIANITY! The veil which was rent asunder in the hour that its Divine Founder consummated his mission, was plucked away not only from the heart of man, not only from the immortality of his being, but from the face of Nature. A mystery

and a doubt which had hung athwart the sky like a vast and gloomy cloud, was withdrawn, and man beheld Creation as the assured work of God: saw a parental hand guiding, sustaining, and embellishing it: and immediately felt himself brought into a near kinship with it, and into an everlasting sympathy with all that was beautiful around him,—not simply for the beauty itself, but because it was the work of the one Great Father—the one Great Fountain of all life and blessing.

The very introduction to the Hebrew literature in the Old Testament, must have produced a deep and delightful change in human feeling. The contrast between the sentiment and the very language of nature, as addressed to man in the literature of the Greeks and that of the Hebrews was startling, warming, and wonderful beyond measure. The beauty of natural objects was no longer a thing apart;—a thing to be admired on its own account; it was allied to a deep sentiment, it became linked to the life of our inner nature. Waters were beheld as the bountiful blessing of Him "who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the field." They became the emblem of that inward purity of which the noblest pagan could form no adequate conception, but which the God of the Hebrews required. They symbolized many of the evils, as well as the refreshments of life. Now they typified, "brethren that deal deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks that pass away; which are brackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid:" now, they were as the billows of affliction,—scenes of trouble—"all thy billows have gone over me:" and now they were as the refresh-

ment of a thirsty soul. The greenness of the grass and of the branch pointed to the beauty, the fleeting beauty of life; and now to the insecure prosperity of the unjust:—"He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden; his roots are wrapped about the heap, and he seeth the place of stones. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying I have not seen him. Behold this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow."

Every thing in nature, the flower—the wind—the spider's web—darkness and light—calm and tempest —drought and flood—the shadow and the noon-day heat—a great rock in a weary land—every thing about us, and above us, acquired in this splendid and inimitable literature, a new and touching meaning; a meaning bound up with our lives; a worth coequal with our highest hopes, or most fervent desires. Everything became a moral and a warning. They were made to illustrate not only the operations of providence, but to cast a new light upon our intellectual being. They did not, indeed, speak out as to the exact value stamped upon man by the Deity, but they gave intimations more profound and startling than anything in the whole round of pagan philosophy. And then, there was an undertone of sorrow, a voice of plaintive regret over man—a delicacy and tenderness of phrase that wonderfully attracted and endeared. What ineffable melancholy is there in these following sentiments! What an intense longing after life, and yet, what a longing for death! What a vivid feeling of the grinding evils of mortal being; and what images of the fulness of peace in the grave!

"Why died I not from the womb? For now should I have lain still, and been quiet; I should have slept: then had I been at rest. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which had built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver; or, as a hidden, untimely birth, I had not been; as infants which never saw the light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great is there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery; and life unto the bitter in soul? Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it, more than for hid treasures? Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave?" Job iii. 11—22.

But this new alliance with nature; this new and spiritual beauty cast upon everything, was not all. The magnificence of Creation and its phenomena were made tenfold conspicuous; and still beyond this, men were no longer left to suppose, or even to contend that the world was the workmanship of Deity. They were no longer left to bewilder themselves amongst a host of imaginary gods,—the universe in its majesty and God — the one sublime and eternal founder and preserver of it, were flashed upon the spiritual vision in the broadest and brightest light. Here was seen the clear and continuous history of Creation:—God, the sole and immortal, sate upon the circle of the world, and its inhabitants were as grashoppers before him. The sun, moon, and stars were of his ordaining and appointing; night and day,

times and seasons revolved before him; his were the cattle on a thousand hills; his all the swarming tribes of humanity. The prophetic writings proclaimed his deity, his power and attributes, in language unparalleled in splendour, and with imagery which embraced all that is glorious, resplendent, beautiful and soothing, or dark, desolate and withering in nature.

Such was the effect of the Old Testament;—and then came the New!—then came Christ! The old shewed us the Deity in unspeakable majesty;—his creation as beautiful and sublime;—Christ proclaimed him THE FATHER OF MEN; and in those words poured on earth a new light. The words which guaranteed the eternity of our spirits, chased a dimness from the sky which had hung there from the days of Adam: they rent down the curtains of death and oblivion, and let fall upon earth such a tide of sunshine as never warmed it till then. The atmosphere of heaven gushed down to earth. From that hour, a new and inextinguishable interest was given us in nature. It was the work of our Father: it was the birth-place of millions of everlasting souls. Its hills and valleys then smiled in an ethereal beauty, for they were then to our eyes spread out by a mighty and tender parent for our happy abodes. The waters ran with a voice of gladness; the clouds sailed over us with a new aspect of delight; the wind blew, and the leaves fluttered in it, and whispered every where of life—eternal consciousness—eternal enjoyment of intellect and of love. Through all things we felt a portion of the divine, paternal spirit diffused, and "the wilderness and the solitary place" thenceforth had a language for our hearts full of the holy

peace and the revelations of eternity. Then the musing poet felt what it has been reserved for one in our day only fully to express :—

> A presence that disturbed him with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things. Therefore is he still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods
> And mountains ; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth : of all the mighty world
> Of eye and ear, both what they half create
> And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of his purest thoughts ; the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of his heart, and soul
> Of all his moral being.

Thus, then, is dissipated the mystery of the more intense love of Nature evinced by the moderns than the ancients. It is but part of that gift of divine revelation which has endowed us with so many other advantages over those grand old philosophers of antiquity, who in the depth of their hearts, darkened and abused by many an hereditary superstition, yet found some of the unquenched embers of that fire of love and knowledge originally kindled there by the Creator, and cherished and fanned them into a noble flame. Had they heard from heaven these living words pronounced—GOD IS LOVE!—had they seen the great ladder of revelation reared from earth to heaven, and been permitted to trace every radiant step by which man is allowed to ascend from these lower regions

into the blaze of God's own paradise, their spirits would have kindled into as intense a glow as ours, and their vision have become as conscious of surrounding glories. GOD IS LOVE! These are words of miraculous power. Once assured that the very principle and source of all life is love, and that it is destined to cast its beams on our heads through eternal ages, we become filled with a felicity beyond the power of earthly evil. All those intimations that creation itself had given us, are confirmed. We feel the influence of the great principle of beneficence in the joy of our own being; in the cheerfulness of surrounding humanity; in the voices and songs of happy creatures; in the face of earth, and the lights of heaven. Seas, mountains, and forests, all become imbued with beauty as they are contemplated in love; and their aspects and their sounds fill us with sensations of happiness. When we read in the Phædon of Plato, the few and feeble grounds, as they now appear to us, on which that good old Socrates raised his arguments for the immortality of the soul; when we hear his exultation on discovering in Anaxagoras the principle laid down, that "the divine intellect was the cause of all beings," we feel with what deep transport he would have witnessed the gates of eternity set wide by the divine hand; and in what hues of heaven the very circumstance would have invested all about him. Yes! the only difference between modern literature and that of the ancients, lies in our grand advantage over them in this particular. It is from the literature of the Bible, and the heirship of immortality laid open to us in it, that we owe our enlarged conceptions of natural beauty, and our quickened affections towards the

handiworks of God. We walk about the world as its true heirs, and heirs of far more than it has to give. We walk about in confidence, in love, and in peaceful hope; for we know that we are the rightful sons of the house; and that neither death nor distance can interrupt our progress towards the home-paradise of the divine Father.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE LOVE OF NATURE IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE OVER THAT OF ALL OTHER MODERN NATIONS. — THE PROMOTION OF THIS PASSION BY THE WRITINGS OF PROFESSOR WILSON, IN BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE; AND BY THE WOOD-CUTS OF BEWICK. — MEANS OF STILL FURTHER ENCOURAGING IT.

In the former chapter I have endeavoured to point out the existence of a striking difference as it regards the love of nature between the classical and modern literature, and to explain, and I hope successfully, the principal causes of it. But it is not the less true, that almost as great a difference exists in this same respect between our British literature, and that of almost all other modern nations. I do not intend to go about very laboriously to attempt to prove this fact, for I think it stands sufficiently self-evident on the face of all modern literature. In science, in art, in history, philosophy natural and moral; in theological, philological and classical inquiries, the continental nations have attained the highest honours. In biography the French are unrivalled, in autobiography the Germans are equally so. In some species of poetry the Ger-

mans contest the palm with us; in mathematical industry, and historical research, they are greatly our superiors; but with the solitary exceptions of Gesner and St. Pierre, where have they any writers to range with our Evelyns, Whites, and Waltons? or poets, with our Thomsons and Bloomfields? or indeed with the whole series of our poets who do not professedly write on the country, but are irresistibly led to it; and from whom the love of it breaks out on all occasions? In the French, the social feeling is the most strongly developed; in the Italian, passion and fancy; in the German, the metaphysical. The Germans, indeed, most strongly resemble the English in their literary tastes. There seems to be a fellow-feeling between them, resulting from ancient kinship. They have a similar character of simplicity; they are alike grave, solid, and domestic, and prone to deep and melancholy thought. They have a love of nature deep as ours, for the tone of their minds makes them, in everything they do attach themselves to, earnest and enthusiastic. In everything relating to the affections, their literature is unrivalled; their feelings are profound, tender, and spiritual; and while a false and superficial taste has made rapid strides amongst us of late years—a taste for glitter, shew, and fashion, the natural accompaniment of wealth and luxury, a growing fondness for German literature must be hailed as a good omen; as likely to give a new infusion of heart and mind to our writings; to re-awaken our love for the simple, the domestic,—the fireside love; in fact, to bring us back to what was the ancient character of the English; high-toned in morals, simple in manners, manly and affectionate in heart. Their

love of nature is as deep as ours; but it is not so equally and extensively diffused. The solemn and speculative cast of their genius has tended to link it with the gloom of forests and tempests, and with the wild fictions of the supernatural, rather than to scatter it over every cheerful field, and cause it to brood over every sunny cottage garden, amid the odour of flowers and the hum of bees. There is something wonderfully attractive in their descriptions of the old-fashioned homeliness of their rural and domestic manners; in the unbustling quietness of their lives, and in the holy strength of their family attachments. Such writings as that Idyl of Voss, describing the manner of life of the venerable pastor of Grenau, the autobiographies of Goethe and Stilling, seem to carry us back into the simple ages of our own country. That which characterized them, seems to be preserved to the present hour in Germany; and then, the affectionate intellectuality of their minds, and their very language, so homely, and yet so expressive, cause them to abound in such touches of natural pathos as are nowhere else to be found. Yet, when their love of nature exhibits itself in descriptions of country life, amid all these charms, we are often tempted to exclaim with the pastor's wife in Voss, when in a pic-nic party they discovered, while taking tea under the forest trees, that they had forgotten the tea-spoons, and had to substitute pieces of stick for them—"O, dear nature, thou art almost too natural!"

But the aspect of the different countries is sufficiently indicative of the natural feeling. Instead of the solitary chateau, or baronial castle, amid dark forests, or wide unfenced plains; instead of the great

landed proprietors crowding into large towns, and the very labourers huddling themselves into villages, and going, as they do, in some parts of France, seven or eight miles on asses to their daily work in the fields, the hills and valleys of England are studded all over with the dwellings of the landed gentry, and the cottages of their husbandmen. Villas amid shrubberies and gardens; villages environed with old-fashioned crofts; farm-houses and cottages, singly or in groups—a continuous chain of cultivation and rustic residences stretches from end to end and side to side of the island. Our wealthy aristocrats have caught a fatal passion for burying themselves in the capital in a perpetual turmoil of political agitations, ostentatious rivalry, and dissipation,—a passion fatal to their own happiness and to the whole character of their minds; but the love of the country is yet strong enough in large classes to maintain our pre-eminence in this respect. The testimony of foreigners, however, is stronger than our own; and foreigners are always struck with the garden-like aspect of England; and the charms of our country houses. A number of a French literary paper, "Le Panorama de Londres," has fallen accidentally into my hands, while writing this, which contains an article, De la Poesie Anglaise et de la Poesie Allemande, from which I transcribe the following passages.

"England has produced her great epic poet, her great dramatic poet; and the last age gave her reasoning poets in abundance. The time for the one and the other is past. By a revolution, the causes of which it would be difficult to trace, her poetry has changed both its character and object; and, strange

enough, under the reign of a civilization the most advanced, her poetry has returned to nature. At first, the fact strikes us as an unaccountable anomaly; for what country owes so much to art as England? The very aspect of the country shews everywhere the hand of man. A scientific culture has changed its whole face. The forests have ceased to be impenetrable; the rivers to be wild torrents; the mountains themselves to be savage. Human industry has appropriated everything; fire, air, earth, everything is subjected, everything is tamed. The very animals seem to submit themselves voluntarily to the service of man. The horse himself, the English horse, so swift and powerful, scarcely neighs with impatience, or capers with eagerness; his very impetuosity is docile. The Englishman is in one sense the king of the world. It is for him that everything is in motion around him: yet he himself is bound by unchangeable customs. He fears change. He has even a religion of an established order. One would think nothing could be more prosaic than a country thus laboured; yet, nevertheless, all Europe resounds with the songs of her poets. Amid the miracles of industry, the profusion of riches, the refinement of luxury; in the face of steam-engines, suspension bridges, and railroads, imagination has lost nothing of its ancient empire; on the contrary, during the last thirty years, she has acquired more: she has been borne, as by an irresistible influence, towards the description of natural objects, and simple sentiments. She has revelled in the charms of a poetry whose freshness seemed to belong to another age. The fact is, if we regard England more attentively, we shall discover her under a different aspect to what

has been usually ascribed to her; and shall be less astonished to find her poetic in seeing her picturesque. That agriculture so marvellous is far from having given up everything to the useful; its object seems rather to have been to embellish than to fertilize the earth. Those fields so well tilled, are green and riant; those quiet streams flow brimful through rich meadows; and, thanks to beautiful trees and living hedges, the very plains are charming. Those seats where opulence parades all its splendour, are environed by greensward pastured by abundant cattle; and the art which designs those immense parks, seems to have no object but to put into a frame a beautiful landscape. The taste is no longer to dig lakes, to cast up mounts, to plant thickets; but to inclose whole rivers, woods, and mountains. Everywhere you discover the sentiment of the beauty of nature. You find it in every class. Neither riches nor poverty have been able to extinguish it. We observe in other countries that the sentiment is unknown to the peasantry. They are the towns which they admire: to them the country is merely useful. But in England everybody loves the country; even those who cultivate it. The most humble cottage is a proof of it. The taste which rarely distinguishes the architecture of the English towns, is reserved, I think, for the country houses. The little gardens which lead to them; the orchards which surround them; even the very bushes of jessamine or of rose, which crown their porches, or tapestry their walls, seem designed to delight the eye. Amid the treasures of an admirable vegetation—gothic ruins, the towers of an old manor, the arches of an abbey, the ivy which clothes the walls of a

parish church; the tree scathed and decaying, which has no value but its age; all these things are respected by every one as the monuments of the past, or the ornaments of the country. The whole population interests itself in everything which adorns its abode; and this nation, the queen of commerce and industry, seems to recollect with affection, that it is to the earth that she owes her wealth, her glory, and her greatness.

"An analogous sentiment pervades the poetry of the English. The verses of their good poets seem to have been composed in the open air; all external objects are by them faithfully portrayed; the impressions they produce are faithfully rendered. Simple sentiments, those of a domestic nature, so well protected by a country life, in them preserve all their force and all their purity. Their recitals are often the most touching and familiar; when they turn upon great adventures, they are related as they would be on a winter's evening before the fire of an ancient castle, or of a humble cottage. Scarcely an English poet is wanting in descriptive talent, not even the least celebrated amongst them. It shines with great *éclat* in Burns, in Crabbe, in Walter Scott. Lord Byron, who has so many others, possesses none perhaps in a greater degree than this."

It is to be hoped that the English poetry will always maintain this character; will always remain the powerful ally of the love of the country: one great means of preserving those features of English rural life so delightfully described in the foregoing extract. Amid the fascinations and temptations to a corruption of taste, from the mighty wealth and political influence of this country, it is to the combined effect of real

simple Christianity, the love of nature, and of that literature which is in alliance with those great conservative powers, that we must look for the maintenance of a sound national heart and intellect; and consequently, of that great moral ascendency, and genuine glory, that as a nation we have obtained. I long with a most earnest longing, for our stability in this respect; for the preservation of those pure, simple, holy tastes which have led our countrymen in all ages, since reading and civilization came upon them, to delight in the pleasant fields, in the pleasant country houses, in the profound peace of noble woods, so favourable to high and solemn musings; and in all those healthful and animating sports and pursuits that belong to such a life. It has been through the influence of these tastes, and of these home-born but exalted pleasures, by the strong human sympathies engendered by living amongst our manly and high-minded peasantry—the hardy sons and bold defenders of their natal soil,—the strong-hearted old fathers,—the fair and modest daughters of uncorrupted England; by living amongst them as their leaders, counsellors, and protectors; by musing over the inspiring annals of the past days of England; on the solid tomes of our legislators, our divines, philosophers and poets, in the calm twilight of ancient halls, or in the sunny seats of their broad, bay windows, looking out on fields purchased by the blood of patriots, and hoary forests that have witnessed the toils of their ancestors, or perhaps received them to their dim bosoms in times of danger; it is by such aliment that the British heart has been nourished, and grown to its present greatness, when its pulsations are felt to the very ends of the earth, and

by milllions of confiding or submissive men, whose destinies depend upon its motions. Our arms may have been wielded in many a mighty battle for the accomplishment of this magnificent end, but it was here that the power of victory grew; our counsels may have, wearily, and stroke by stroke, worked out this ample breadth of glory; but it is here, and it was thus, that the wisdom, and the prudence, and the irresistible fortitude sprung, increased, and gave to those brave men and high measures their vigour and stability; here that they were born, and fostered to their beneficent fulness.

Therefore would I have everything which may tend to keep alive this genuine spirit of England, may keep open all the sources of its strength and its inspiration, encouraged: every taste for the sweet serenity, the animating freshness, the preserving purity of country life, promoted; everything which can embellish or render it desirable. For this cause I delight in the every-day spreading attachment to all branches of Natural History; in the great encouragement given to all books on country affairs; and in the advancing love of landscape-painting, by which the most enchanting views of our mountains, coasts, wild lakes, forests, and pastoral downs will be brought into our cities, and spread in sunshine and in poetry along their walls. For this I am thankful with a deep thankfulness, for the mighty strains of poetry that have been poured out in this age, brimmed and gushing over with the august spirit of nature:—for Wordsworth and Coleridge; Rogers and Campbell; for Shelley and Byron and Keats, and for many another noble bard; for the Romances of Scott, which have

pre-eminently piled quenchless fuel on this social flame, by sanctifying many of the most beautiful scenes in the kingdom with the highest historical remembrances: and not less, for that wonderful series of articles by Wilson, in Blackwood's Magazine,—in their kind, as truly amazing, and as truly glorious, as the romances of Scott, or the poetry of Wordsworth. Far and wide and much as these papers have been admired, wherever the English language is read, I still question whether any one man has a just idea of them as a whole. Whatever may be our opinion of the side which this powerful journal has taken in politics, it must be admitted that while it has fought the battles of Toryism with vigour, it has fought them in a noble spirit. There was a day when a foul influence had crept into it; when it was personal, rancorous, and apt to descend to language and details below the dignity of its strength; but that day is gone by, and it has been seen with lively satisfaction by all parties that it has purged itself of this evil nature, and as it has become peerless in fame, it has become more and more generous, forgiving, and superior to every petty nature and narrow feeling. Its politics are ultra, but they are full of intellect; and they who desire to see what *can* be said on the Tory side, see it there. But the great attraction to literary men has long been, that splendid series of ample, diffuse, yet full and overflowing papers, in which everything relating to poety and nature find a place. These are singly, and in themselves, specimens of transcendent power; but taken altogether, as a series, are, in the sure unity of one great and correct spirit, such a treasury of criticism as is without a parallel in the

annals of literature. For, while they are full of the soundest opinions, because they are the offspring of a deeply poetical mind—a mind strong in the guiding instincts of nature; they are preserved from the dryness and technicality of ordinary criticism by this very poetic temperament. They come upon you like some abounding torrent, streaming on, amid the wildest and noblest scenes; amid mountains and forests and flowery meadows; and bringing to your senses, at once, all their freshness of odours, dews, and living sounds. They are the gorgeous out-pourings of a wild, erratic eloquence, that, in its magnificent rush throws out the most startling, and apparently conflicting dogmas, yet all bound together by a strong bond of sound sense and incorruptible feeling.

They are all poetry:—sometimes, in its weakest and most diluted form; again, gushing into the most melting pathos; and then again playing and frolicing like a happy boy, half beside himself with holiday freedom and sunshine; then vapouring, and rhodomontading, and reeling along in the very drunkenness of a luxuriant fancy, intoxicated at the ambrosia-fountains of the heart; and then, like a strong man, all at once recovering his power and self-possession—if self-possession that can be called, which, in the next moment, gives way to a new impulse, and soars up into the highest regions of eloquence, pouring forth the noblest sentiments and most fervid imaginations, as from an oracle of quenchless inspiration.

It is in this manner, and this spirit, that the writer has—reviewed shall I say? no, not reviewed, but proclaimed, trumpeted to the farthest regions, idealized, etherealized, and made almost more glorious than

they are in their own solemn grandeur, the poems of Wordsworth, of Milton, of Shakspeare, of Spenser, of Homer, and of many another genuine bard. And it is thus that he has led you over the heathy mountains and along the fairy glens of the north, to many a sweet secluded loch, into many a highland hut. It is thus that he loves to make you observe the noble peasant striding along in his prime of youth—in his sedate manhood—in his hoary age, more beautiful than youth, for then he is crowned with the wisdom of his simple experience of the trials and vanity of life, and of the feeling that he draws near to eternity. It is thus that he bids you stand, and mark the fair young maiden busied about the door of her parental hut, more graceful and happy in the engrossment of her simple duties, beneath the sun and the blue heavens, than the very daughter of the palace in the lap of her artificial enchantments. It is thus he shews you the young mother tossing her laughing infant in the open air, while her two elder children are rolling on the sunny sward, or scrambling up the heathy brae; and her mother sits silently by the door, in the basking tranquillity of age. It is thus that he fills you with the noblest sympathies, with the purest human feelings; and then astonishes you with some sudden feat of leaping, running, or wrestling; and as suddenly is gone with rod in hand, following the course of a clear, rapid stream, eagerly intent upon trout, or salmon. And then he is the poet again, every atom of him, meek as a bard of nineteen, or of ninety; all tenderness, purity, and holiness; the poet of the City of the Plague, or of the Children's Dance, forcing you to forget that he ever swaggered in an article, or rol-

locked in a Noctes. He is now basking in the shine of a May-day, amid the sparkling dews, the waving flowers, the running waters, and all the delights of earth, air, and the blue o'er-spanning sky.

These are papers that have already done infinite service to the cause of poetry and nature: and therefore do I rejoice in their existence, and addition to all that sublime accumulation of fervid poetry and prose in the praise and love of the country, with which our English literature, above all others, is enriched.

But there is one person to whom I must still give a separate mention; an individual to whom we owe a signal increase of country delight,—Thomas Bewick. Every painter of landscape is a friend to the best feelings and tastes of humanity; but Bewick has, in a manner, created a new art. He has struck out a peculiar mode of embellishing books with snatches of rural scenery, that will, if pursued in the true spirit, do more to diffuse a love of the country than all other modes of engraving put together. To see what may be done, let us only see what he has done. Through his revival of the art of wood-cutting, we have now hundreds of wood-engravers, and thousands of wood-embellished books: yet lay your hands on any one of these volumes, and, with all deference to the great talent evinced, the great beauty produced,—till you open Bewick you shall not know what wood-cutting is capable of doing for books on the country.

I have heard some wood-engravers speak with contempt of Bewick, and say—"Why, he was very well for his time of day, but we have scores that can excel him now." To such men I have only one reply—"you don't understand the country. I grant you

there are many who can produce a more showy print; but it was not show which Bewick aimed at,—it was truth: and if you will know which is most excellent, take the one and the other; and let them be both opened before some country family of taste, and you will see that your print will dazzle the eye for a moment; it will be a moment of surprise and delight; but when the moment is past, the eye will fall on Bewick, and there it will be riveted; and there, the longer it dwells the stronger will be its fascination, and it will be the beginning of an everlasting love." And why is this? Simply because we have in one, splendour of style; in the other, Nature! pure, faithful, and picturesque Nature,—Nature in her most felicitous, or most solemn moments. I have heard those who loved the country, and loved it because they knew it, say, that the opening of Bewick was a new era in their lives. I have seen how his volumes are loved, and treasured, and reverted to, time after time, in many a country house; the more familiar, the more prized; the oftener seen, the oftener desired.

And why should it not be so? It is not so much as a triumph of art, as a triumph of genius, that they are love-worthy. Yet as specimens of art they have eminent merit. See, in what a small space he gives you a whole landscape—a whole wide heath, or stormy coast, with their appropriate objects. See, with a single line, a single touch, what a world of effect he has achieved! But it is the spirit of the conception, and the sacred fidelity to Nature, which stamp their value upon his works. They are the works of an eye which sees in a moment what in a scene advances beyond common-place; what in it has a story, a moral,

a sarcasm, or touch of transcendent beauty. They are the works of a heart bound by a bond of indissoluble love to the sweetness and peace of nature; rich in recollections of all her forms and hues; and of a spirit which cherished no ambition, no hope on earth, superior to that of throwing into his transcriptions the express image of his beloved Nature.

This is the great secret of the delight in his wood-cuts. They are full of all those beauties, those fine yet impressive beauties, that arrest the gaze of the lovers of nature; and they are so faithful that they never deceive, or disappoint the experienced eye. The vignettes of his Natural History are in themselves a series of stories, so clearly told that they require no explanation; and are full of the most varied human interest. He delights in the picturesque and beautiful in nature, and the grotesque in life. Whatever he introduces, its genuine characteristics are all about it; beast or bird, there it is in the very scenery, and amid the very concomitants that you see it surrounded by in nature. You miss nothing that you find in the same situation in the real scene and circumstance; and, what is of more consequence, you never see a single thing introduced which has no business there. He is the very Burns of wood-cutting. He has the same intense love of nature; his bold freedom of spirit; his flashes of indignant feeling; his love of satire; and his ridicule of human vanity and cant. In his landscapes, he gives you every thing the most poetical: wide, wild moors; the desolation of winter; the falling fane, and the crumbling tower; wild scenes on northern shores, with their rocks and sea-fowl, their wrecks and tempests. In his village scenes you

have every feature of village life given with a precision and a spirit equally admirable. He delights to seize hold on humanity even in some of its degradations, as drunkenness and gluttony, and Hogarth-like, to excite your disgust against the abuse of God's good things and man's high nature. He delights equally to exhibit those ragged rapscallions that abound in the streets of towns, and the purlieus of villages; uncultivated, neglected, and therefore graceless, reckless—vulgarity and wickedness stamped on their features, and even in their strong, close-cut, thick-set heads of hair; full of mischief and cruelty from top to toe. There you have them, just in the commission of those barbarities or depredations that speak volumes for the necessity of better popular education: and as for beggars, strollers with bear and monkey, lame soldiers, and all the groups of tatterdemalions that are scattered all over this country, there are no end of them. At times he is full of whim; at others half in jest, and half in solemn earnest. Again, he touches you with pity for the aged and forlorn; and often rises into a tone of deep moral warning, and into actual demonstrations of the sublime and beautiful.

The elements in their majesty are made to laugh to scorn the inflated vanity of man. A stately church has sometime been reared on a pleasant and commanding mount near the sea. You are made to call to mind the pride and the gratulation in which it was erected in the palmy days of the Catholic faith. You see it in its newness, with all its fair proportions and noble completeness,—a beautiful temple to the Christian Deity. You see how the country people come in awe and wonder to behold it; into what a

silence of veneration they drop as they approach; with what a prostration of astonishment of heart they enter, while the new and merry bells sound above their heads; and all abroad the glad sunshine of summer is pouring, and casts its light into the glorious interior: and the sea-breeze comes fluttering with a full delight; and everything seems to speak of triumph, stability, and enduring joy. You know with what solemn pomp the prelate, in full canonicals, and followed by his train of clerical brethren in their becoming robes, and surrounded by the powerful and the beautiful of the neighbourhood, proceeds to perform the rites of consecration. And with what pride the great family, who have given the land to God, and expended the revenues of ample estates for many years in erecting this goodly fabric, see all, hear all, and find hard work to conceal the inward swell of gratified ambition. How they look on all the accomplished miracle of the place; the lofty, arched roof above; the stately columns along the aisles; the priest in his pulpit; the people in their seats. With what proud gratulation they hear the voices of the choristers break forth, and fill "this house which they have built." With what a high, elating, intoxicating feeling, with what a proud joy they kneel down on the silken cushions, and open the golden clasps of their richly-painted missals; all this we see; and then the dream of strength and glory and endurance is gone;—is gone from them and you. There stands the ancient church! Ancient? Yes it is now ancient. All that dream of delight, all that throng of wondering people, have long passed away. Yes! the very founders, whose hearts beat in pride,

are now dust and ashes beneath your feet;—ay, and their children and children's children to the sixth or seventh generation. That noble fabric, then so fair of hue; so admirable in its workmanship; so sharp in all its mouldings, and delicate in its tracery; that temple, in which so many prayers were put up for the mariner tossed on that wilderness of mighty waters on which it looked—is a ruin! The winds and the tempests of ages have blown and beaten upon it. The ocean has come in fury, and rent away its western front, that so gloriously used to fling back the splendours of the setting sun; and the very mound of the dead is rifled by the billows. What is that which I read upon a fallen stone, over which the waves, at every returning tide wash with insulting strength? "This stone is erected to perpetuate the memory of" ——. O pride! O vanity and swelling confidence of "man that is a worm"—what a rebuke! But what is this? Another stone fallen—and fallen yet lower;—"Custos Rotulorum, of the County of" ——. And have time and tide not spared even this great man? Is the very keeper of the Rolls gone, and his monument after him? Where then is human stability? The waves, and that ransacked monument, and that stately ruin of a church, all say, not on earth; not in the works of man. The very house which he had raised, the very ground which he had consecrated, are pulled down by the elements; and even the bones of himself and children are swept into the great deep. I do not know, in the catalogue of the paintings with which this country is enriched, one that speaks with a more sublime power to the imagination than this wood-cut of the littleness of human

pride; and of the only sure hope of honour and endurance, in the eternity of virtue.

There is another sketch of a similar class, but of an opposite inculcation. While that strikes at the vaunting spirit of human pride, this speaks a sad consolation to the struggling and miserable. It is a moon-light view of a solitary burial-ground. It is like one of those in Scotland, distant from the place of worship; perhaps on a lonely heath. There is not a building in view to give the least feeling of proximity to human life. It is still—far off—and alone. The moon pours a melancholy light on the wild, grassy turf, and the foliage that overhangs the enclosing wall; and here and there, stoop the heavy headstones of the dead. On one in the foreground is inscribed — "GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES, AND ALL TIMES GET OVER."

His churchyard scenes, indeed, are all full of the most beautiful and truly human sentiment. In one, you have an old man reading a headstone,—"VANITAS, VANITATUM, OMNIA VANITAS." It is a sentiment which strikes down to the bottom of his soul, as a voice of warning from heaven, and the voice of memory from the days of his past life. The old man stands propt on his staff, and you cannot misinterpret the thoughts which throng upon him. He is carried back through all his days; his days of boyhood and buoyant youth; his days of manly ardour and triumph; his days of trial and decay—to the very hour in which he stands here. The wife of his youth lies in the dust at his feet; his very children are all gone before him, or remain to neglect him; his friends have dropped away, one after another; he alone is left, a

shattered remnant of other and happier times: left in a noisy and a crowding world. Truly it is—"vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But see, here comes a boy driving his hoop. He bounds over the very ground, past the very stone which has conjured up in the old man's heart such a host of sad thoughts. But none of them come to him. To him all is new; the world is fair; the present is Paradise. He scarcely looks around him, and yet he enjoys all nature. The sunshine plays upon his head; the air visits his cheek; the earth is green beneath him. He thinks not of the dead under his feet; of the awful stones around him. He does not even see the old man himself,—a more striking memorial of mortality and the vanity of life, than all the rest. This is true human life: age, sad and observant of every solemn memento; youth, in the reckless happiness of its own charmed existence.

There is but a slight step and hardly that, from his satire to his humour, for one commonly partakes of the other. But in humorous incidents he abounds. Here is a good woman hanging out her clothes. A gipsy-like beggar-woman, with a child at her back, is going out of the garden, and in true beggar recklessness leaves the gate open. While the unconscious dame is busy at her line, in come the hens. One of them is already strutting across her clean white linen, that lies on the grass-plot, and leaving conspicuous marks of her dirty feet; and in are marching a whole drove of young pigs, with the old sow at their heels. In another place is seen the snug garden of some curious florist, with auriculas blooming in pots, and some choice plant under a large glass;

and here too a mischievous sow has conducted her brood; and some of them have made their way through the paling, and are in full career towards the auriculas. Another moment, and glass, flowers, all will be one piece of destruction. The old sow, shut out by her bulk, and a yoke upon her neck, the token of her propensities, stands watching from beneath her huge slouch ears, with the utmost satisfaction, this scene of devastation.

Here again, is a country lad mounted on a shaggy pony, and doubtless sent on some important errand; but a flight of birds has captivated his attention, and so engaged is he in watching, that the pony has wandered out of the way, and has reached the precipitous brink of a river. The lad still gazing after the birds, finding the pony halt, bangs him with his cudgel; the pony hangs back, and the little dog behind with uplifted foot wonders what the lad can mean. There are two men fetching a tub of water from a water-cask, but they are so lost in gossip, that the water is running all away. A countryman to avoid paying toll at a bridge, is fording the river below, holding the tail of his cow. But his hat is blown off, and he dare not let go his hold to save it. He will get a good wetting, and suffer greater loss than the toll; while the tollman and a traveller on the bridge witness and enjoy his dilemma. Another countryman is crossing a river in a style grotesque enough. The old man is wading; on his back is his wife, on her's a child; and on her head a loaded basket. If the old man's foot slip, what a catastrophe! In one place is an old dame going to the village spring, and finding a whole flock of geese frolicing in it. Her looks of

execration and her uplifted stick, are infinitely amusing. In another, is an old dame about to mount a stile, and a tremendous bull presenting himself on the other side. Notwithstanding the bold bearing and protruded cudgel of the old dame, one knows not whether it be most dangerous to fight or flee. And here is the string of a kite, caught on the hat of a countryman crossing a stream on horseback. It would be difficult to decide whether the distress of the man, or that of the boys is the greater. On goes the horse, and the rider tries in vain to get rid of the string. His fate is to be pulled backward off the horse, or that of the boys to be dragged into the stream, or to lose their kite.

There is another class of vignettes, in which cruelty to animals is held up to abhorrence. There is the man with his cart, striking his horse on the head with a bludgeon; his hat has fallen off in his passion. Ragged lads are belabouring an ass with a gorse bush. A hardened lad has a cat and dog harnessed to a little cart in which is a child; the cat is nearly terrified to death at the dog, the child is crying amain; and the lad is trying to force the whole team into the water. In most of these cuts a gallows is seen in the distance, as the probable goal of the career.

Another class is that of country accidents, full of appropriate spirit; men crossing streams by means of the long boughs of trees, which are breaking and letting them fall. A blind man led by his dog, crossing a narrow foot-bridge, where the hand-rail is broken down, and his hat is blown away by the wind. Old people caught in storms on wide, open heaths; old, weary people far away from any town, as indi-

cated by a mile-stone marked XI. miles on one side, and XV. on the other. But they are endless, and of endless variety. There are some, as I have said, truly sublime. A shipwrecked man on a rock in mid ocean, praying; the waves leaping and thundering around him; no single vessel in view, his only hope in God. The hull of a vessel lying stranded on a solitary coast. It is evident that it has been there for years; for its ribbed timbers are laid bare, and it speaks both of human catastrophe, and solitude, and decay. A fine contrast—a circle of men on a village green witnessing a fight, all vulgar eagerness and tumultuous passion; the rainbow, that circle of heaven, spanning the sky beyond them in such pure beauty — in the profound calm and holiness of nature.

Through all these representations, the spirit of the picturesque is poured without measure. Such winter scenes! such summer scenes! all the occupations and figures of rustic existence; fishermen, hunters, shooters, ploughmen, all in their peculiar scenery and costume. There are anglers in such delicious places, by such clear, rapid, winding waters, with such overhanging rocks and foliage, that one longs instantaneously to be an angler. We have all the spirit of Izaak Walton's book, in two square inches of wood-engraving: his descriptions of natural beauty, his deep feeling of country enjoyment, and his single and thankful contentment in his art. There are men and boys sleeping on sunny grass, or beneath the shade of summer trees. O! so luxuriously, that we long to be sleeping there too. There are such wild sea-shores, and caverned rocks, with boys climbing up to get at the sea-fowls' eggs, and such stormy waters, that we

are wild with desire to wander by those rocks and waves. The sedgy water-sides, such as are found on moors where the wild ducks, and snipes, and herons haunt, are inimitable. Nature is everywhere so gloriously, yet so unostentatiously portrayed, as none but the most ardent and devoted of her lovers can portray her. There is nothing gaudy, shewy, or ambitious; she is most simple, and therefore most beautiful.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRESENT STATE OF WOOD-CUTTING AS IT REGARDS RURAL SUBJECTS.

Unmeaning glitter, unprecedented softness, unprincipalled novelty, shall sometimes set aside for awhile the truth and simplicity of nature, and the approbation of ages.—*Life of Ryland.*

From what has been said in the last chapter, it is obvious that had Bewick been but one of a series of wood-cutters during the established period of the art, his merit would have been eminent and peculiar; but when it is recollected that, at one stride, he brought it to comparative perfection, our obligations to him are wonderfully increased.

The direct consequence of his revival of the art is, that we have now tens of thousands of volumes embellished with wood-cuts, and upwards of two hundred engravers in this department. The Penny Magazine alone is said to pay for its wood-cutting 2000*l.* per annum. This magazine and some of its cheap cotemporaries have made a peculiar application of this art, which is, in itself, a great national blessing. By stereotyping wood-engravings, they are enabled to

Libraries.

strike off any number of copies of them with their letter-press, and by this means, prints of a large size, and of great strength of effect, are made to circulate amongst the people, even to an extent to which the only limits must be those of education. Thus are many pictorial subjects placed before the eyes of tens of thousands who could otherwise never have seen them. Subjects from the paintings of the old masters; landscapes from every country on the globe, with their peculiar characteristics; prints of ancient and modern buildings; of ancient and modern sculpture; of animals, plants; in fact, every subject of natural or human history, all brought livingly to the sight, and at such an amazingly trivial expense, that the desire of knowledge is, at once, quickened and gratified in a degree of which our fathers had not the most distant idea; nor of the effect of which have we, perhaps, any adequate conception. We feel, however, that it must be full of virtue and happiness. Throughout thousands and tens of thousands of cottages shall the eyes which, without these blessed facilities, would never have glanced on anything beyond the objects surrounding their daily life, now gaze in living delight, on the magnificent scenes, the beautiful productions of every land and climate; on the stern or fantastic splendour of foreign towns and cities, domes and minarets; on the forms and costumes, the dwellings and implements of the most distant nations; on the animal natures of air, earth, and ocean; on the faces of men who have been the lights, or terrors of the world; of those who have fought for, and thought for, sung for, and died for man and his cause; the spread of knowledge and religion; in fact, for that social and illimitable hap-

piness of which these things are the precursors; a happiness that shall be brought to every house, in city or in desert, to every fireside, however humble.

This is a great and beneficent result, from the union of two noble arts; for, whatever tends to embellish human life; to give to toiling men a refining pleasure; to bring them from base excitements and public haunts, to the pure and peaceful enjoyments of home; to draw them to their own ingles; to induce them to sit among their children, and delight their eyes with objects of beauty, and feed their growing spirits with those natural facts, in which the wisdom and goodness of God are made so sensible to young minds; whatever does this, does the work of love; the work of human happiness and national greatness. To enlighten the general mass, and at the same time to kindle the noblest feelings of the soul of man, is the sure means to build up the state with true citizens; to protect the people from despotism, and government from popular caprice.

This, I say, is one great result; yet even this does not seem to me the highest legitimate province of the art. It is obvious that prints of the kind described—of buildings, portraits, or historic scenes, must, after all, come from metal with greater perfection than from wood. To most subjects metal gives a richness and delicacy that wood can never equal. Wood can give great strength and boldness, but accompanied nevertheless with something of hardness and constraint. It is only the power of striking off prints with the letter-press which gives wood that admirable advantage over metal of which I have been speaking. It becomes, in that case, a substitute for metal, where

metal could not be used without defeating the ultimate object by its expense. There it is merely a good substitute for metal. But there is one department in which it is superior even to metal; and that is in such vignette representations of rural life and scenery as Bewick has used it in. Here it triumphs over metal; for it does not here require so much brilliance, or richness, or extreme delicacy, as a certain homely beauty belonging to rustic objects. The beauty of nature does not consist in showyness and dazzling lustre, so much as in pleasing colours, a simple grace of form, and a certain roughness and opacity of surface, on which the eye can rest longer without fatigue than on more polished substances. Now it is in these qualities that Bewick's engravings abound. He is sacredly faithful to Nature. He catches at once the spirit of the country and of its wild denizens. He is simple, beautiful, but not glaring;—nature is never so.

Yet amongst all our wood-engravers,—and many of them are continually employed on rural subjects,—it is as true as it may seem astonishing, that there is not one of them who can bear a moment's comparison with Bewick as a delineator of rural life. This is owing to no deficiency of talent—we have many artists of the highest talent—it is owing to other causes. If it seem surprising that no one from the time of Bewick's restoration of the art, to the present moment, should have equalled him in the representation of nature, it is not more surprising than that from the time of Milton to that of Cowper no one wrote good blank verse; that with Milton's free and natural majesty as a model before them, we should have had

nothing better than the stilted stiffness of Akenside, and the pompous inflations and ungrammatical distortions of Thomson. The same causes in both cases have produced the same effect. Our artists, like the poets, have forsaken nature herself, to study and imitate one another. While our artists are employed to depict Nature, they are living in our mighty capital, cut off from the very face of nature. They have full employ; for the eyes of those for whom they labour are not more familiar with the country than their own. Dash, and meretricious show captivate the multitude, and therefore dash and show are given in abundance; the wondering lover of nature looks for her in vain. The ambitious and frippery taste of the age is stamped on all the most excellent productions of what should be the rustic burin. We now and then see a better spirit; things overflowing with talent; and on the very verge of nature. Such are some of the beautiful recent illustrations of Grey's Elegy, Chevy-Chace, Aiken's Calendar of the Year, the bold sketches in Hone's Table-Book, and the elegant ones in some of their books for the young published by Darton and Clark, Tegg, and others: but, in general, our most skilful artists are not contented with the simplicity of nature; they want better bread than can be made of wheat. Hence while they are admired in cities, Bewick reigns sole and triumphant all through the country.

But how is this to be remedied? As I have said, we have talent and manual skill equal to anything; what we want are purer designs,—designs, in fact, from Nature! We want subjects drawn from the same source that Bewick drew them. I do not mean that our artists should imitate Bewick; no, that they

should imitate Nature,—the true, the beautiful, the unambitious. Had Bewick lived a thousand years, he would every day have seen some new subject, some new features, in the everlasting changes and combinations that surround the fixed spirit of the universe. We have pupils of his—Harvey and Nesbit in particular, and why do not they, with their high talent, produce the same genuine nature? The answer is obvious. They are citizens. They have abandoned the daily cognizance of Nature; they have taken a directly opposite course to Bewick. He was the inseparable companion of Nature from his boyhood. All his life long he was watching after, and pursuing her into her most hidden retirements. To him

> High mountains were a feeling, but the hum
> Of human cities torture.

He had tried the life of London, but he could not bear it. His soul was robbed of its nourishment. He was shut up, blinded, famished in that huge wilderness of stone; dinned by that eternal chaos of confused sounds. He gasped for the free air; he pined for the dews; for the solemn roar of the ocean; for the glories of rising and setting suns. His father when he sent him from his country home at Cherryburn, to be apprenticed to Mr. Bielby at Newcastle, said to him at parting—"Now Thomas, thou art going to lead a different life to what thou hast led here: thou art going from constant fresh air and activity, to the closeness of a town and a sedentary occupation: thou must be up in a morning, and get a run." And Thomas followed faithfully—for it chimed exactly with his own bent,—his father's injunction. Every

morning, rain or shine, often without his hat, and his bushy head of black hair ruffling in the wind, he would be seen scampering up the street towards the country; and the opposite neighbours would cry—"There goes Bielby's fond boy." These morning excursions he kept up during his life; and they did not suffice him. He ran away during his apprenticeship, and roamed far and wide through the glorious and soul-embuing scenery of Scotland. Year after year, and day after day, it was his delight to stroll over heaths and moors, by sedgy pools and running waters. He saw bird, beast, and fish, from his hidden places, in all the freedom of their wild life. He saw the angler casting his line; the fowler setting his net and his springes; the farmer's boy amusing his solitude, when

He strolled the lonely Crusoe of the field—

prowling after water-fowl amid the reedy haunts; watching the flight of birds with greedy eyes; lighting fires under the skreening hedge, and collecting sticks for fuel, and blowing them on hands and knees into a flame. Such were his loves, his studies, his perpetual occupations; and to have similar results, we must have persons of a similar passion and pursuit. We must have designers; for we have plenty of manual dexterity, capable of executing any design to the minutest shade,—we must have designers in whom Nature is, at once, an appetite, a perpetual study, and quenchless delight. Landscape painters we have of this character. Turner, with his gorgeous creations; Copley Fielding with his heaths and downs, in which miles of space are put upon a few feet of can-

vass, and that soul of solitude poured upon you in a gallery, which you before encountered only in the heart of living nature; Collins with his exquisite sea-sides, and rustic pieces; Hunt with his really rustic characters; Barrett with his sunsets; Stanfield, Cattermole, and others. We want a designer for wood-cuts of a similar character. What scenes of peerless beauty and infinite variety might an individual give us, who would devote himself, heart and soul, to this object; who would ramble all through the varied and beautiful scenery of these glorious islands at successive intervals; who would pedestrianize in simple style; who would stroll along our wild shores; amongst our magnificent hills; prowl in fens and forests with fowlers and keepers; and seek refreshment by the fire-side of the way-side inn; and take up his temporary abode in obscure and old-fashioned villages. Such a man might send into our metropolis, and thence, through the aid of the engravers, to every part of the kingdom, such snatches of natural loveliness, such portions of rural scenery and rural life, as should make themselves felt to be the genuine product of nature—for nature will be felt, and kindle a purer taste and a stronger affection for the country.

I am not insensible to all the difficulties which lie in the way of such a devotion: nor that such a scheme will be pronounced chimerical by those who, at a far slighter cost, can please a less informed taste; but till we have such a man, we shall not have a second Bewick; and till such a mode of study is, more or less, adopted, we shall never have that love of the genuine country gratified, which assuredly and extensively exists.

Since writing the foregoing remarks, it is with great pleasure that I have seen the arts of designing and wood-engraving beginning to separate themselves, and that of designing for the wood engravers taking its place as a distinct profession. Mr. Harvey has, for some time, been exclusively a designer; and Mr. Melville is following his example. Some exquisite designs by this latter artist have been made for a little volume of Mrs. Howitt's — Birds and Flowers—published by Darton and Clark. This important step has only to be followed up by designers in the manner pointed out in this chapter, to insure that complete return to nature which is so much to be desired, and where such an exhaustless field of beauty and life awaits the observant artist, as would place the present pre-eminent manual skill of our wood engravers in its true and well merited position.

PART II.

THE FORESTS OF ENGLAND.

Amongst the most interesting features of the country are our forests. There is nothing that we come in contact with, which conveys to our minds such vivid impressions of the progression of England in power and population; which presents such startling contrasts between the present and the past. We look back into the England which an old forest brings to our mind, and see a country one wild expanse of woodlands, heaths, and mosses. Here and there a little simple town sending up

> Its fleecy smoke amongst the forest boughs.
> From age to age no tumult did arouse
> Its peaceful dwellers; there they lived and died,
> Passing a dreamy life, diversified
> By nought of novelty, save, now and then,
> A horn, resounding through the neighbouring glen,
> Woke them as from a trance, and led them out
> To catch a brief glimpse of the hunt's wild route;
> The music of the hounds; the tramp and rush
> Of steeds and men;—and then a sudden hush
> Left round the eager listeners;—the deep mood
> Of awful, dead, and twilight solitude,
> Fallen again upon that forest vast.

We see in the distance the stately castle of the feudal lord; we hear the bell of the convent from the neighbouring dale. There are solitary hamlets and scattered cottages, with mud walls and thatched roofs, peeping from the ocean of umbrageous tree-tops, and little patches of cultivation. Born thralls are tilling the lands of the thane, or watching his flocks and herds, to defend them from the wolves and bears; foresters are going their rounds beneath hoary oaks, on the watch for trespassers on venison and vert. We meet with the pilgrim with his scallop shell, and sandal shoon; we come suddenly on the solitude of the hermit, where some spring bubbles from the forest turf, or scatters its waters down the fern-hung rocks. Perhaps the noble and his train sweep past in pursuit of the stag or boar; perhaps the outlaw and his train in the same pursuit, and setting at defiance, amid vast woods and tracks familiar to himself, all the keen officers, and bloody statutes of forest law.

> It is a pleasure but to hear,
> The bridles ringing sharp and clear,
> Amid the forest green;
> To hear the rattle of the sheaves,
> And coursers rustling in the leaves,
> With many blasts between.
>
> *Stewart Rose's Red King.*

Perhaps there is the sound of martial alarm—the clash of sudden onset in the forest glade. The dwellings of the vassals surrounding the lord's castle are in flames, fired by the band of some hostile noble. Such is the England into which an old forest carries our imagination;—partially peopled with feudal barons and unlettered serfs; without commerce abroad; without

union within; brave, yet demi-savage; aspiring, but violent; pious, yet sanguinary in all its penal enactments. When we step out of memory and imagination into the cheerful daylight and conscious present, what an England now! All those forests, with three or four exceptions, are gone!—their names alone left in the land by the powerful impressions of time and custom. One wide expanse of cultivation;—the garden of the world;—swarming towns, splendid cities, busy and populous hamlets appearing everywhere, and fenced fields interscattered with patrician dwellings, not crowned with towers, lit by mere loop-holes, defended with bastioned gateways, portcullises, and drawbridges, and moats; but standing with open aspects of peaceful beauty, amid fair gardens and fair lawns, undefended by feudal ramparts, because a thousand times more strongly fortified by the security of enlightened laws. We see a swarming people, free, and full of knowledge, even to its hinds and mechanics, in possession of the highest arts of life; the hills and dales covered with their harvests and their cattle;—the seas round the whole globe with their ships;—a people, at once the most powerful and the most civilized on the earth.

Those old feudal towers are, for the most part, crumbling into ruin, the wasting vestiges of a barbarous system, or embellished and adapted to the spirit of the present times. Those abbeys and convents, standing in similar ruins, or exhibiting still more marvellous change,—the altars pulled down, the chantries silenced, and the professors of a sacred celibacy driven out, and replaced by men of the world, with their wives and families;—no longer places of worship, but

places of domestic abode. Those two mighty powers, Feudalism and Popery—gone for ever!

Here is an astounding change. A stupendous march has been going on from that time to this; and one from which, is there a man, however much he may murmur at the present times, who would be willing to recede a single step? Would the noble be willing to give up the delights of London for a feudal castle surrounded by wild woods and wastes, a troop of rude retainers, and no resources but the year's round of hunting, or of party feuds—not of tongues in Westminster, but of swords and firebrands in the forests? Would he acquiesce in this, when the country can scarcely keep him a few months, though he can assemble round him kindred spirits, books, the elegancies and mind of social life, and the speediest news of the whole world? Would the country gentleman like to sink into a feudal retainer? The merchant follow his procession of pack-horses through narrow roads, and in high peril of bandits? The farmer drop down into the born thrall? The parish priest convert his pleasant parsonage and family into the solitary bachelorship of popery? Would the man most pressed by the cares and heart-griping necessities of this populous and struggling time, be willing to accept the quiet simplicity of those days, with their monotonous solitude, ignorance, servitude, and perpetual danger of arbitrary infliction of death or mutilation?

And yet, in what colours of the rose do our imaginations clothe these times? The repose, the simplicity, the picturesque solitude, come before us with a peculiar feeling of delight. And so, no doubt, there was a wild charm about them. The old minstrels

delighted to sing about them, and they did it with a feeling of nature. The green shaws, the merry green woods, especially when "the leaves were lark and long" in summer; when

> The wood-wele sang and would not cease,
> Sitting upon the spray;

the exploits of the outlaw; the hymn of the lonely anchorite; the vesper-bell of the convent; and the chivalrous adventures of knights and dames in forests and hoary holts, fired them with a genuine enthusiasm, and communicate their warmth to us. No doubt too, that baron and esquire, forester and lawless pursuers of the deer, had all a wild delight in their life; and instinctively closing the eyes of our mind upon what was dark and unpalatable in their practice, we open them to all that was free, peaceful, and in contrast with our own situation and mode of existence. We rush from cities and social anxieties into the free world of woods and wildernesses, with hearts that feel the cool refreshments of nature. To us it is a novelty, with all its piquancy about it; and we cannot bide long enough to wear off the charm. We come too, with the high poetry of a thousand intellectual associations to take possession of woodland freedom. We have all the power of Milton, Shakspeare, Spenser, and Ariosto upon us; and how delicious seems the picturesque England of the feudal ages! We have, indeed, now too little of what they had too much. They, like the modern Americans, would gladly have exchanged some of their trees for cultivated lands; they had too much of a good thing; in popular phraseology, they could not see the wood for trees: but oh! how delightful are those tree-lands to us,

prisoners of civilization, and walkers amongst brick-walls.

Let us wander awhile now amongst those fresh woodlands. Our old chroniclers tell us, that this kingdom was once nearly overspread with forests; that they existed from time immemorial; that is, long before the Norman dynasty commenced, by which they were more perfectly defined, carefully fenced, and protected with sanguinary laws. They were that part of the country, and indeed, the greater part, which retained its original state. That which remained uninclosed, and therefore called forest, or *foresta, quasi ferarum statio*, because there naturally retired and made their abode the wild creatures, *ferœ naturæ*. All this was held to belong to the king; and when the Conqueror began to reign, who had occasion to give away and divide large tracts amongst his military followers, he began to exercise more strictly his prerogative over the remainder. Not satisfied with sixty-nine forests, lying in almost every part of the kingdom, such, and so many, as Evelyn says, as no other realm of Europe had, he laid waste a vast tract of country in Hampshire, and created another, thence called the New Forest, because it was the last added to the ancient ones, except that of Hampton Court, the work of Henry VIII.

Various opinions respecting the origin of this New Forest have occupied the attention, and divided the opinions of antiquarians and historians. Polydore Virgil asserted that the Conqueror's motive for afforesting so large a tract of country here, was because it enabled him to maintain it, secure from the intrusion of all but his own creatures, and thereby always to have

a most convenient station for the escape of his followers, in case of any revolt, to their own country, or for the secret and secure arrival of fresh forces thence. Mr. Camden, however, has satisfactorily shewn, that no such object was attributed to him by the chroniclers of his own, and immediately succeeding times, who certainly were sufficiently bitter against him, for his haughty temper, and the reckless atrocities which he committed in carrying into effect his system of policy, the thorough breaking of the Saxon spirit, and the establishment of his own noblesse. No such motive, however plausible, was attributed to him for five hundred years. As Mr. Carte very reasonably suggests, if such was his intention, he would have carried it into effect within the first five years of his reign, during which time he was engaged in putting down disaffection, and strengthening his position. In the pursuance of these objects he was not in the habit of stopping short at trifles on the score of humanity. "His horrible devastation," says William of Malmsbury, "of great part of Yorkshire, and all the counties belonging to England, north of the Humber, was made that the Danes and Scots invading his kingdom that way, might find no subsistence, and to punish the people for disaffection to his government; without regarding what number of innocent persons would be involved in the destruction." We are told, even by one of the Norman historians, (Ord. Vit. iv. p. 314, 515; and Ingulph. p. 79), who speaks of it with horror, that above 160,000 men, women and children perished by famine in those ruined counties. The devastation was such that, for above sixty miles, where before there had been many large and flourish-

ing towns, besides a great number of villages and fine country seats, not a single hamlet was to be seen; the whole country was uncultivated, and remained so till Henry II's reign.

If we date the making of this forest at the same time with the publishing of the forest laws, it will follow that it was made merely for the pleasures of the chase. This was natural enough, when we reflect that he had taken up his favourite residence at Winchester; and this is the reason assigned by all the authorities nearest to his own time. The Saxon Chronicler, believed to be cotemporary with William, assigns this sole reason, and adds—"William loved great deer, as if he had been their father;" which Henry of Huntingdon copies. No trace of other motive appears in Gemeticensis, his own chaplain, Knyton, Ordericus Vitalis, Simon Dunelmensis, Brompton, William of Malmsbury, Florence of Worcester, Matthew Paris, Hemingford, or other ancient authority. In such a man the passion for the chase was cause sufficient. In all early stages of a country, where it abounds with forests, and intellectual resources hardly exist, hunting must constitute the great passion of life. The Britons, the Saxons, were passionate hunters. Harold had already restrained all forests to his own use, and William put the finishing stroke to the system. Here, however, occurs a second point of difference of opinion in the historians. Some tell us that he made this forest, others, that he merely enlarged it. It is certain that the ancient forest of Ythene existed here before; but it is probable that it had become rather a woodland than a preserve of game; and that William's enlargement was almost, in fact, a new creation: and strictly

speaking, entirely so, as a forest, having its defined boundaries, its stock of deer, its appointed officers, and its code of laws and courts:—this, the very name of New Forest clearly implies.

Others, again, attribute to his son Rufus, the enlargement and the devastations, and thence look upon his own death, in the very spot where he had pulled down a church, as a direct divine judgment. There can be little doubt but that both had a hand in it. The Conqueror probably laid waste and depopulated so as to complete the boundaries of his forest, and carry out his conceived plans, and Rufus went on, on the old royal principle, of making a solitude and calling it peace, to pull down churches, and remove what hamlets or cottages yet remained to interfere with princely ideas of forest seclusion. That William did all that is attributed to him, is declared by all the historians of that and immediately succeeding times; and Gemeticensis, his own chaplain, distinctly declares, that it was the popular belief that the death of his two sons, Richard and Rufus, and his grandson, the son of Robert, were judgments of God upon him for his atrocities committed here in the making of it. These atrocities consisted in laying waste the country, to the extent of thirty miles in length, or ninety in circumference, the extent still attributed to it; destroying towns, chapels, manors and mansion houses; according to some writers, twenty-two mother-churches, to others thirty-six, and to others thirty-two. Unquestionably the number was great; two churches only being mentioned in his own Survey in Doomsday Book, between A.D. 1083 and 1086, the 17th and 20th of his reign, as standing in all that space, while in the

rest of the county there were 100. This violence he completed by driving out the inhabitants and stocking the land with deer, stags, and other game.

Such was the origin and extent of the ancient royal forests of England, all preserved and maintained for the especial and exclusive pastime of the kings. Truly the state of a king was then kingly indeed: 69 forests, 13 chases, and upwards of 750 parks existing in England. There were, in Yorkshire alone, in Henry VIII.'s time, 275 woods, besides parks and chases, most of them containing 500 acres. Over all these the king could sport; for it was the highest honour to a subject to receive a visit from the king to hunt in his chase, or free warren, while no subject, except by special permission and favour, could hunt in the royal parks. These 69 forests of immense extent lying in all parts of England, and occupying no small portion of its surfuce, all stood then for the sole gratification of the royal pleasure of the chase, and supplying the king's household; and few persons have now any idea of the state, dignity, and systematic severity of this great hunting establishment of England, maintained through all succeeding reigns to the time of the Commonwealth, and some part of it much longer. Each forest was an imperium in imperio, having its staff of officers, — the lord warden, his deputy, a steward and bow-bearer, rangers, keepers or foresters, verdurers, agistors, regarders, bailiffs, wood-wards, beadles, etc. etc., with their own courts. First the Court of Attachment, held every forty days, in which all attachments against offenders in the forest were received, evidence heard upon them, and were enrolled to be presented at the Court of Swain-

MOTE. This swainmote was held three times every year, which all the swains, or free tenants, were bound to attend. The warder or his steward presided, and the foresters, verderers, and other ministers of the forest were the judges. Here all the attachments enrolled in the records of the Court of Attachment were received and examined, but no award or judgment was made or executed by this court; but it swore in a grand jury to examine these attachments, of which all that appeared made on sufficient grounds and evidence were reserved for the decision of the JUSTICE-SEAT, or highest court of the forest. The justice-seat, or Court of Eyre in the forest, was held once in three years. Two justices in Eyre were appointed as supreme judges in these courts: one having jurisdiction in all the forests north, and the other over those south of the Trent. Yet there appears in the early reigns to have been great irregularity in the appointment of these justices. Sometimes there were two, according to the legitimate ordinance; at others we find three going the circuit, or *jornay*, as it was called, as in Edward I.'s reign, when in the 15th year of that reign, three are named as going the jornay of the north; viz. Sir William Vesey, Thomas Normanville, and Richard of Gryppinge, justices. This Sir William Vesey, Richard of Gryppinge, and their fellows, justices, are repeatedly mentioned in the king's writs. This might arise from the discovery that collusion and bribery to cover peculation had been the consequence of one justice going alone; for it is complained, that it "was fonden that oure lorde the kynge had susteyned grete and many folde hurte fro the jornay of Robert Neville."

Great peculation and appointment of his own creatures for his own purposes were proved against Robert Evringham, and he was "deposed from his office of chief forestershippe of fee in the Forest of Sherwood for ever."*

Every officer was sworn to present to the court of attachment, every offender against the laws of the forest, for the decision of the justices, through the process already described, a system of most summary rigour, without favour or concealment, yet abuses still crept in; and the long term between the coming of the justices—three years—tended greatly to this; for as no case could be finally decided till then, it afforded vast scope for the powerful and wealthy to try the force of bribery on the justice, as well as made the case fearfully severe on those who could not find bail or give security, and must therefore be in gaol all that time; especially as a man might be taken up on presumption. This, therefore, became a gross injustice to the innocent.

You would imagine from the oaths of the different officers, that their duties were all alike, for they bound them all to seize, secure, and present for attachment all persons committing any depredations on *vert or venison;* vert, curiously enough Anglicized —Green Hugh, *i. e.* green hue, and so continually written in the Assisæ Forestæ, meaning everything having a green leaf, and therefore extending from the forest trees to the underwood and shrubs which formed cover for the game, and also to the grass which was the food of the game. All persons seen

* MS. documents respecting Sherwood Forest, in Bromley House Library, Nottingham.

suspiciously strolling about on the highways, especially if in cloaks, with dogs in leash, or out of it, pursuing small birds, squirrels, or vermin, cutting turf, peat, or boughs, or fallen timber, heath, or fern, without proper authority. The dwellers in the purlieus of the forest were kept a strict eye upon; and all gates, or fences, or dykes were presentable which were too high for the deer to pass from one part of the forest to another. The forests were very systematically divided into walks, or keepings, wards or regards, over which was a properly subordinate succession of officers. The ranger had surveillance over the principal keepers; they over their deputy keepers, and night-walkers. The verderers had especially to look after the vert, although sworn to watch for and bring to punishment, offenders of all kinds, and to them must all offenders be brought to give surety to appear at the attachment. Besides these, there were in every township, and every regard, wood-wards and their men, who attended to the felling and accounting for all timber. There were agistors also to look after the agistment of cattle. The Swainmote was empowered to inquire and to see that all officers punctually performed their forest duties, going regularly their rounds; and that they paid the wages of their deputies, so that none might be tempted to commit depredations on the game, wood, browze, peat, turf, deers' horns, or any other product of the forest. A sharp vigilance was kept up on this head, and severe punishment awarded for such offenders. No produce of the forest might be taken out of it without a direct warrant from the justice or warden, neither cattle, timber, dead deer, vert, or anything

whatever. Those who had freeholds within the forest, as came to be the case in time, through grants from kings to favourites of one kind or another, were subject to the same restriction. And where warrant was granted for any of these purposes, or for supplying the religious houses with wood for burning etc., the verderers were to see that no more was actually taken out than the warrant allowed, and were punished if convicted of failing in this duty.* Perambulations at stated periods were made throughout each forest, its enclosures, purlieus, and boundaries, to ascertain that all was kept in order, and that there was neither waste of vert nor *venison*, which included all game; nor encroachment within, nor without. The external boundaries of a forest, were not like those of a park, walls or pales, but metes and bounds, meres, rivers, and hills, otherwise it was not a forest.

Drifts of the forest were made, at least twice in the year. By the Assises of Pickeringe and Lancaster,

* Yet a curious instance is recorded in one of the Inquisitions of Sherwood Forest, of the way in which the vigilance of these laws was evaded. The Countess of Newcastle, whose husband was probably at that time governor of Newark Castle, had procured large quantities of timber out of the forest, under a warrant to furnish such timber for the necessary repairs of that castle. The quantity delivered led to an inquiry, and it was found that the castle was not repaired at all, but that the timber had been sold, and the countess had got the cash. Yet after this it was again found, that not being able to procure another warrant for timber, she had, however, got one for the delivery of cord-wood for burning, and under the title of cord-wood, the deputy-warden had supplied her with some of the best oaks of the forest. On a second investigation it turned out that the deputy-warden was a partner in a timber trade—that timber was thus procured through the means of the countess's plea of public service, and that she and the deputy shared the spoil.

the officers of the forest did use to make drifts at least twice in the year: the first, fifteen days before Midsummer, at the beginning of the *fencemonth*, that the forest might be avoided and emptied of all cattle during that time. And every commoner was then forced to come and challenge his beasts, and take them away, or they were taken by the officers of the forest as strays. The second drift was at Holyrood-day, when the agistors did begin to agist the king's demense woods, and all beasts and cattle of all sorts then found in them were driven by the officers of the forest to some convenient place, and impounded, and then warning was given that every man should come and fetch his own. Forests are driven for three causes. First, for the avoiding of surcharging; secondly, for the avoiding of *forreners*, who have no right; thirdly, that no beasts be commoned that are not legally commonable, as geese, goats, sheep, and swine, which are not commonable. Swine, however, were admitted to the woods of the king's forests if their noses were duly ringed, and paid for their run there, a sum called pannage; and owners of woods in the forests might run such swine in their own woods. Upon reasonable causes the officers of the forest may make their drifts oftener if they will.

Manwood's Forest Laws, p. 86-7.

Such was the general constitution of a forest, with its courts, officers, laws, and customs; and so systematic does it seem; surveillance and subdivision so regularly descending downward, till it included watch and ward over every part, and the familiar acquaintance of every forester with his own location, that one really wonders how any Robin Hood could long escape

amongst them. The difficulty of the thing no doubt it was that contributed so much to raise his renown. But the vast extent of the forests, the obscurity of the wooded parts, and the immense out-boundaries laying them open to the nocturnal incursions of marauders, still account for the traditionary exploits of deer-stealers, in spite of the then forest-law, which itself gave a strong spice of interest to the adventurer.

The severity of the laws under William and his immediate successors was monstrous. "In the Saxon times," says Blackstone, "though no man was allowed to kill or chace the king's deer, yet he might start any game, pursue and kill it on his own estate, but the rigour of those new constitutions vested the sole property of all the game in England in the king alone; and no man was entitled to disturb any fowl of the air, or any beast of the field, of such kinds as were specifically reserved for the royal amusement of the sovereign, without express licence from the king, of a chase or a free warren; and these franchises were granted as much to preserve the breed of animals as to indulge the subject. From a similar principle to which, though the forest laws are now mitigated, and by degrees grown entirely obsolete, yet from this root has sprung a bastard slip, known by the name of the Game Law, now arrived to and wantoning in its highest vigour; both founded upon the same notion of permanent property in wild creatures, and both productive of the same tyranny to the commons; but with this difference, that the forest laws established only one mighty hunter throughout the land; the game laws have raised a little Nimrod in every manor. And in one respect, the ancient law was

much less unreasonable than the modern, for the king's grantee of a chase or free-warren, might kill game in every part of his franchise, but now, though a freeholder of less than 100*l.* a-year, is forbidden to kill a partridge upon his own estate, yet nobody else, not even the lord of the manor, unless he hath a grant of free-warren, can do it without committing a trespass, and subjecting himself to an action."

Commentaries, iv. 415, 8vo.

The full rigour of the forest laws of the Norman dynasty must be a curious subject of contemplation to an Englishman now. William decreed the eyes of any person to be pulled out, who took either a buck or a boar. Rufus made the stealing of a doe, a hanging matter. The taking a hare was fined 20*s.*, and a coney 10*s.*, as money was then! Eadmer adds, that fifty persons of fortune, being apprehended by the last prince for killing his bucks, were forced to purge themselves by the fire of ordeal, etc. Henry I. made no distinction between him who killed a man, and him who killed a buck; and punished them who destroyed the game, though not in the forest, either by forfeiture of their goods, or loss of limbs. Richard I. enacted mutilation, and pulling out of eyes for hunting in the forest, though he afterwards relaxed a little, and contented himself with banishment, imprisonment, or fine. Whoever was summoned to the chase, and refused to go, paid a fine of 50*s.* to the king.

The feeling created amongst the people by this bloody code, may be imagined by the language of John of Salisbury, who, after speaking of the higher offences, says,—"What is more extraordinary is, that it is often made by law criminal to set traps or snares

for birds, to allure them; by springes and pipes, or use any craft to take them; and offenders are punished by forfeiture of goods, loss of limbs, or even death. One would suppose that the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea were common to all; but they belong to the crown, and are claimed by the forest laws wherever they fly. Hands off! keep clear! lest you incur the guilt of high treason, and fall into the clutch of the hunters. The swains are driven from their fields, while the beasts of the forest have a liberty of roving; and the farmer's meadows are taken from him to increase their pasture. The new-sown grounds are taken from the farmer, the pastures from the grazier and shepherd; the bee-hives are turned away from the flowery bank, and the very bees are hardly allowed their natural liberty."—*Polycraticon*, i. 4.

Ah! Johannes Sarisburiensis, thou wert a radical! Can anybody read the indignant spirit of this passage, and say that radicalism is anything new under the sun? This is the very soul of Hampden. The inhumanity of those proceedings occasioned frequent disturbances, till the revolt of the barons extorted from Henry III. the CHARTA DE FORESTA, by which he repealed those severe laws, and enacted others more equitable. These, again, were from time to time, softened by different monarchs, as civilization, and popular power and influence advanced, by what are called *Assises of the Forest*, which were a kind of revision and re-enactment of the forest laws, by different kings; omitting or modifying any former provisions which might seem contrary to the spirit of the time; and adding such others as were deemed necessary. As, for instance, the assise of Edward I., the

preamble of which was thus:—"Here followeth the Assise of Forest of our lorde the kinge E., sonne of kinge H. and his commandements of his forests in englonde, made by the assent and counsell of Archbusshoppes, busshoppes, abbots, earls, barons, knyghtes of all his realme." This consists of twenty items; and provides principally, that any person found in the forest, or the woods of the forest, trespassing on the venison, shall be taken, and, on conviction of hunting or taking the king's venison, he shall be imprisoned, and not delivered without the king's especial commandment, or that of his justice of the forest.* That all trespassers on the vert, shall be taken before the verderers, and they shall find sufficient surety to come before the next court of attachment; and such attachment shall be enrolled, to be presented to the justices of the forest when they next come into those parts to hold the pleas of the forest. That none who held woods within the forest should suffer those woods to be without a keeper, or they should be taken into the

* An old rhyme, full of mystery to uninitiated ears, icontained the law of attachment in this case. Any person was to be seized and conveyed before a forester, or verderer, who was found,—

At dog-draw, stable-stand,
Back-berond, or bloody-hand.

Which mean,—*at dog-draw*, having a dog in a leash, following a deer by the scent, in order to come upon it and slay it; or having wounded a deer, and following the dog-draw, or guidance of the dog to overtake it. *At stable-stand*, standing in the forest with bow ready to discharge at the deer, or with a dog in a leash ready to slip him on its appearance. *At back-bear*, or *back-berond*, actually carrying any forest property away. *At bloody-hand*, with hands or person bloody, as from the actual slaughter of game. Though three of these are truly called by the lawyers, *presumptions*, they were held sufficient for attachment and conviction.

king's hands again. Such holders of woods, or any other persons inhabiting within the forest, should not have any bows, arrows, or arbalasts; or any brach, greyhound, or any other engine "to hurte the king of his Deare." But any dogs introduced into the forest shall be expedited; or, according to the English phrase, lamed, so that they may not be able to seize the deer; and that the expeditation, or laming of dogs, shall be made every three years. This practice of laming is differently described by different writers. Some define it as consisting in cutting off at least one of the fore-feet; others in cutting off the claws only; and others, in cutting out the fleshy part of both fore-paws. Probably the practice differed in different forests, and different ages. At all events, the dogs were so mutilated as to be unable to seize a deer; the Latin term implies the actual lopping off the foot. Future assises confine this laming to mastiffs; no greyhounds, brachs or brackets being allowed entrance at all. No mower was allowed to bring "a great mastiff to drive away the deer of our lord the king, but little dogs to look after such things as lie open."

The assise continues—that no holders of *foreign* woods in the forest shall agiste* before the regular time of the king's agistment, "which begins at mychalmas and lastes to martinmasse then next followinge." That none shall assart† in the forest without being taken before the verderer, and giving surety to

* That is, turn in cattle to graze, at so much per head, which was done in most forests, and the money paid to the verderer,—a certain number of persons mostly having a right of common besides, by grant or charter.

† Root up the covert and make a clearing.

appear at the next attachment. That no tanner or whittawer of leather dwell in the forest, out of boroughs, towns, etc. That any archbishops, bishops, barons, or knight being found hunting, the forester shall demand "a wedde and a pledge," and if he refuse, the forester shall see "his dede," and cause it to be enrolled to be presented before the justice of the forest. Other assises say, that the bodies of such dignitaries, whether temporal or spiritual, shall be seized till they give security for their appearance; but that any such nobleman, or dignitary, being sent for to the king on any business, shall have the privilege of hunting one or two deer as he goes through the forest, and the same on his return, provided it be in view of the forester, otherwise he shall blow a horn, lest he seem to steal it.

That any man going along the king's highway, through a forest, with a bow, shall bear it without string; or with dogs, he shall have them coupled, and his greyhounds "knytted in a leash." That if any damage be done to the king's vert or venison, or waste, of which no rational account can be given, the foresters, or verderers, under whose care the said charges have been, shall be taken, and no satisfaction but their own bodies shall be received till the king, or his justice, have had their will of them. Yet, so early as Henry II., it was found that all these strict provisions being insufficient to prevent waste of the woods, and "extreme minishing of the deere," the office of regarder was established. The regarders were originally to be knights, but "other good people" were afterwards admitted. They were to be chosen by the king's writ, and there were to be twelve in

each forest. The foresters and verderers were gentlemen: the former appointed by the king's letters-patent; the latter by writ in full county, like our present members of parliament; yet were the regarders set as inspectors over them. They were to go through every part of the forest, accompanied by the foresters, verderers, woodwards, bailiffs, and beadles, and examine into the state of vert and venison; comparing them with the reports of their predecessors, and seeing that no waste, or embezzlement, or improper, or superabundant agistment was made; that no assarts, or purprestures* were attempted. This, however, they could not do when they pleased. They were summoned by writ, once in three years, preparatory to the coming of the justice to hold his pleas, to whom they were to deliver their roll, duly signed and sealed.

Queen Elizabeth, who found that, during the minority of her brother Edward, and the troubled reign of her sister Mary, great waste, destruction, and embezzlement had taken place, made repeated inquests into the state of the forests by her commissioners, and had general surveys and valuations made. She descends in her assises to the very bees, which it seems built then abundantly in our woods, as they do in the American forests now—the old, hollow oaks, being very store-houses of honey. Hawks, herons, the nests of hawks, and every species of beast that had been held the legitimate denizens of forests by her predecessors, as stags, bucks, hares, badgers, foxes, and even cats and squirrels, are enumerated.

* Encroachments and obstructions of several kinds, such as impediments in the highways, turning dykes, building swine-cotes, mills, etc.

These forest laws continued till the Commonwealth. One court of justice was held after the Restoration; but after the revolution of 1688, they fell into desuetude, and now all offences against the forests are cognizable by the common laws of the land.

For the fullest information on this subject, see Cowel, Heskett, Coke, and Blackstone; or Manwood on Forest Laws.

The English Forests were formerly as follows:

1. Aiden, Northumberland.
2. Allerdale, Cumberland.
3. Amsty, Yorkshire.
4. Arden, Warwick.
5. Ashdown, Sussex.
6. Bere, Hants.
7. Bernwood, Bucks.
8. Beverley, York.
9. Blakemore, or Forest of Watchet, } Dorset.
10. Braden, Wilts.
11. Charnwood, Leicester.
12. Cheviot, Northumberland.
13. Chute, Hants.
14. Clun.
15. Cors.
16. Dartmoor, Devon.
17. Darval, Hereford.
18. Dean, Gloucester.
19. Deeping, Lincoln.
20. Delamere, Cheshire.
21. Epping, Essex.
22. Exmore, Devon.
23. Feckenham, Worcester.
24. Gillingham, Somerset.
25. Gáltres, York.
26. Hainault, Essex.
27. Hampton Court, Middlesex.
28. Hardwicke, York.
29. Hartlebury,
30. Huckestow, Shropshire.
31. Inglewood, Cumberland.
32. Kingswood, Gloucester.
33. Knaresborough, York.
34. Langden, Durham.
35. Leonard.
36. Lee.
37. Leicester, Leicester.
38. Mendip, Somerset.
39. Malvern, Worcester.
40. Martindale, Cumberland.
41. Maxwell, Cheshire.
42. Needwood, Stafford.
43. New Forest, Hants.
44. Pamber, Hants.
45. Peak, Derbyshire.
46. Penrise.
47. Perbroke, Dorset.
48. Rath.
49. Riddlesdale, Northumberland
50. Rockingham, Northampton.
51. Rychiche, Somerset.
52. Salcey, Northampton,
53. Savornac, Wilts.
The only forest in possession of a subject.
54. Selwood, Somerset.
55. Sherwood, Nottingham.
56. Staines, Middlesex.
57. Teesdale, Durham.

58. Waltham, Essex.
59. Whittlebury, Northampton.
60. Wichwood, Oxford.
61. Wencedale.
62. Westbere.
63. Windsor, Berks.
64. Whinfield, Westmorland.
65. Wirrol, Cheshire.
66. Whitby, Yorkshire.
67. Woolmer.
68. Wyre, Worcester.
69. Wrokene, Salop.

Of these, most are now dis-afforested, and have left only their names. Those which remain are under the management of a board of commissioners; the chief of whom is, by virtue of his office, always one of his majesty's ministers. Needwood is principally inclosed, leaving, however, a portion belonging to the crown, and one lodge. It had formerly four wards, and four keepers, with each a handsome lodge, now in the hands of different private gentlemen. In Elizabeth's reign it was about 24 miles in circumference, and in 1658 it contained 9220 acres of land. In 1684 it contained 47,150 trees, and 10,000 cord of hollies and underwood, valued at 30,710*l*. It and Bagot's Park, formerly part of it, still contain some of the largest oaks in England. Windsor is the King's Park, and the most complete and splendid example of a park in the world.—Of New Forest, and Sherwood, I propose to speak more particularly.

CHAPTER II.

NEW FOREST.

This forest seems to retain not only more of the forest character than all our other forests, but to have maintained more exactly its ancient boundaries. William of Malmsbury says, the Conqueror laid waste thirty miles of country for this forest. The perambulation of the 22nd of Charles II., extending from Milton south, along the Avon west, to Bramshire north, and within Southampton Water east, by Fawley and Boldre back to Milton, includes about thirty miles square, and this is the extent that is now attributed to it by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. In the present hundred of New Forest, we have the

parishes of Minstead, Fawley, and Boldre; the chapels, or curacies of Lyndhurst, Beaulieu, Exbury, and Brokenhurst. It is indeed the only one of our forests which now can give us a perfect idea of what an English forest was in the feudal ages. It has not acquired, like Windsor, too much of a park-like character by containing a royal residence; nor has it been enclosed, and shaped into quadrangular fields: but there it is, in its original extent,—vast, wild, stocked with deer; with its alternations of woods and heaths, morasses and thickets; interspersed with hamlets and farms, and forest-huts, as were the forests of old. As you go from Southampton to Lyndhurst, you have a fine ride through its lower regions, and see enough to make you desire to steal away into the beautiful woodlands. Lovely streams come winding out of its shades, and hasten towards the sea. You get glimpses of forest glades, and peeps under the trees into distant park-like expanses, or heathy wastes. The deer are wandering here and there: here you see whole troops of those ponies peculiar to this forest; pheasants and partridges come often running out on the way before you. All about grow hollies, which were encouraged in most ancient forests for winter browze; and you have glimpses of forest-trees that were enough to enrich all the landscape painters in the world. But if you wish to know really what New Forest is, you must plunge into its very heart, and explore its farthest recesses. You may go on from wood to wood, and from heath to heath; now coming out on the high ground, as on the Ringwood road, the wild forest lying visible for miles around, and the country towards Southampton and to the very sea, all spread out wide and beautifully to the eye:—now descending into profound solitudes,

and the depth of woodland gloom. It is a wild, wide region, in which you may satiate yourselves with nature in its primitive freedom. In Bilhaghe, in the forest of Sherwood, you find a fragment of an ancient forest unique in its kind,—a region of old oaks, shattered by the tempests of five hundred years, and standing in all the hoary grandeur of age; and are thereby struck with a quick feeling of the mighty flight of time,—of the utter change and revolution of manners and government since those trees were in their prime; but when you step into the New Forest, you step at once out of the present world into the past. You do not see it existing before your eyes as a remnant of antiquity, but as a portion of it, into which, as by some charm, you are carried. It is not a decaying relic; it is a perfect and present thing. The trees are not scathed and hollow skeletons, except in some few places, but stand the full-grown and vigorous giants of the wood. This is owing to the timber being cut down for the navy ere it begins to perish, and yet being left to attain a sufficient growth, and to furnish vast woods that extend over hill and dale, and give you foot-room for days and weeks without fear of exhausting the novelty. It looks now as it must have looked to the eye of one of our Norman monarchs, except that the marks of the Conqueror's ravages and fires are worn out; the ruins of churches and cottages are buried beneath the accumulated mosses and earth of ages; and peaceful smoke ascends from woodland habitations.

In my brief visit to it, I set out from Lyndhurst, and walked up to Stony-Cross, the place of Rufus's death. From the moment that I turned up out of

Lyndhurst, I seemed to have entered an ancient region. There was an old-world primitive air about everything, that filled me with a peculiar feeling of poetry. I left behind the nineteenth century, and was existing in the twelfth or fourteenth. Open knolls, and ascending woodlands on one side, covered with majestic beeches, and the village children playing under them; on the other, the most rustic cottages, almost buried in the midst of their orchard trees, and thatched as Hampshire cottages only are—in such projecting abundance,—such flowing lines. Thatch does not here seem the stiff and intractable thing it does elsewhere; nor is it cut in that square, straight-haired fashion; but it seems the kindliest thing in the world. It bends over gables and antique casements in the roof, and comes sweeping down over fronts resting on pillars, and forming verandas and porches; or over the ends of the houses, down to the very ground, forming the nicest sheds for plants, or places to deposit garden-tools, milk-pails, or other rural apparatus. The whole of the cottages thereabout are in equal taste with the roof; so different to the red, staring, square brick houses of manufacturing districts. They seem, as no doubt they are, erected in the spirit, and under the influence, of the *genius loci*. The bee-hives in their rustic rows; the little crofts, all belong to a primitive country. I went on; now coming to small groups of such places; now to others of superior pretensions, but equally blent with the spirit of the surrounding nature;—little paradises of cultivated life. As I advanced, heathery hills stretched away on one hand; woods came down thickly and closely on the other, and a winding road

beneath the shade of large old trees, conducted me to one of the most retired and peaceful of hamlets. It was Minstead. There was an old school-house; and beneath the large trees that overshadowed the way, lay huge trunks of trees cut ready for conveyance to the naval dock-yards; and the forest children, on their way to school, were playing amongst them; now climbing upon them, now pushing each other off with merry laughter; boys and girls, as I approached, scampering away, and into the school.

I know not how it is, but such places of woodland and old-fashioned seclusion, of such repose and picturesque simplicity, always bring strongly to my mind the stories of Tiecke. There must be a great similarity in the aspect of these scenes, and of those which he has so much delighted to describe. I thought of the old woman with her dog and bird. Every solitary cottage seemed just such as hers was. I seemed to hear the birch-trees shiver in the breeze, the dog bark, and the bird sing its magic song.

Alone in wood so gay
'T is good to stay,
Morrow like to-day
For ever and aye:
O, I do love to stay
Alone in wood so gay.

It was early autumn. All birds really had ceased to sing; and the deep hush of nature but made more distinct this spirit-song, amid the delicious reveries in which I went wandering along, enveloped as in a heavenly cloud. All over the moorland ground spread the crimson glow of the heather. I went onward and upward; passing the gates of forest lodges,

and looking down into valleys, whence arose the smoke of huts and charcoal fires. And anon, I stood upon the airy height, and saw woods below, and felt near me solitude, and a spirit that had brooded there for ages. I passed over high, still heaths, treading on plants that grow only in nature's most uncultivated soil, to the mighty beeches of Boldre Wood, and thence away to fresh masses of forest. Herds of red-deer rose from the fern, and went bounding away, and dashed into the depths of the woods; troops of those grey and long-tailed forest horses turned to gaze as I passed down the open glades; and the red-squirrels in hundreds, scampered up from the ground where they were feeding on fallen mast, and the kernels of pine-cones, and stamped and chattered on the boughs above me.

A lady who lives on the skirts of the forest, and who moreover has walked through the spirit-land with power, and is known and honoured by all true lovers of pathos and imagination, had solemnly warned me not to attempt to pass through the larger woods without a guide; but what guide, except such as herself, or as the venerable William Gilpin would have been, could one have that we should not wish away ten times in a minute? If we must be lost, why, so let it be,—but let us be lost in the freedom of one's own thoughts and feelings. Delighted with the true woodland wildness and solemnity of beauty, I roved onward through the widest woods that came in my way, and once, indeed, I imagined that a guide would really have been agreeable. Awaking as from a dream, I saw far round me, one deep shadow, one thick and continuous roof of boughs, and thousands of hoary

boles standing clothed, as it were, with the very spirit of silence. A track in the wood seemed to lead in the direction I aimed at; but having gone on for an hour, here admiring the magnificent sweep of some grand old trees as they hung into a glade, or a ravine, some delicious opening in the deep woods, or the grotesque figures of particular trees which seemed to have been blasted into blackness, and contorted into inimitable crookedness by the salvage genius of the place,—I found myself again before one of those very remarkable trees which I had passed long before. It was too singular to be mistaken, and I stood to hold a serious council with myself. As I stood, I became more than ever sensible of the tomb-like silence in which I was. There was not the slightest sound of running water, whispering leaf, or the voice of any creature; the beating of my own heart, the ticking of my watch were alone heard. It was that deep stillness which has been felt there by others.

> The watchmen from the castle top
> Almost might hear an acorn drop,
> It was so calm and still;
> Might hear the stags in Hocknell groan,
> And catch, by fits, the distant moan
> Of King-garn's little rill.
>
> *The Red King.*

Whichever way I looked the forest stretched in one dense twilight. It was the very realization of that appalling hush and bewildering continuity of shade so often described by travellers in the American woods. I had lost now all sense of any particular direction, and the only chance of reaching the outside of the wood was to go as much as possible in one direct line.

Away then I went—but soon found myself entangled in the thickest underwood — actually overhead in rank weeds; now on the verge of an impassable bog, and now on that of a deep ravine. Fortunately for me, the summer had been remarkably dry, and the ravines were dry too,—I could descend into them, and climb out on the other side. But the more I struggled on, the more I became confounded. Pausing to consider my situation, I saw a hairy face and a large pair of eyes fixed on me. Had it been a satyr, I felt that I should not have been surprised, it seemed so satyr-like a place. It was only a stag — which, with its head just above the tall fern, and its antlers amongst the boughs, looked very much like Kühleborn of the Undine story. As I moved towards him he dashed away through the jungle, for so only could it be called, and I could long hear the crash of his progress. Ever and anon, huge swine with a fierce guffaw rushed from their lairs—one might have imagined them the wild boars of a German forest. At length I caught the tinkle of a cow-bell—a cheerful sound, for it must be in some open part of the forest, and from its distinctness, not far distant. Thitherward I turned, and soon emerged into a sort of island in the sea of woods, a farm, like an American clearing. I sate down on a fallen tree to cool and rest myself, and was struck with the beauty of the place. These green fields lying so peacefully amid the woods, which, in one place pushed forward their scattered trees, in another retreated; here sprinkling them out thinly on the common, and there hanging their masses of dark foliage over a low-thatched hut or two. The quiet farm-house too, surrounded by its belt of tall

hollies; the flocks of geese dispersed over the short turf, and the cows coming home out of the forest to be milked: it was a most peaceful picture, and unlike all that citizens are accustomed to contemplate, except in Spenser, or the German writers. These cow-bells too, have something in their sound so quaint and woodland. They are slung by a leathern strap from the neck of the leader, having neither sound nor shape of a common bell, but are like a tin canister, with a ring at the bottom to suspend them by. They seem like the first rudimental attempt at a bell, and have a sound dull and horny, rather than clear and ringing. The leaders of these herds are said to have a singular sagacity in tracking the woods, and finding their way to particular spots, and home again, by extraordinary and intricate ways.

Having now a clear conception of my position, I proceeded leisurely towards Stony-Cross, the reputed place of the catastrophe of Rufus. The tree whence the fatal arrow glanced, or, at least, the one marked by popular tradition as it, was standing till about a century ago, when a triangular stone was set down to identify the spot; with these inscriptions, one on each side.

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1. Here stood the oak, on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell at a stag, glanced and struck King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, in the breast, of which he instantly died, on the second of August, A.D. 1100.

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2. King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, being slain, as is before related, was laid in a cart belonging to one Purkess, and drawn from hence to Winchester, and was buried in the cathedral church of that city.

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3 A. D. 1745: That the place where an event so memorable had happened, might not be hereafter unknown, this stone was set up by John Lord Delawar, who has seen the tree growing in this place.

This place is called in Doomsday Book, Truham, by Leland, Thorougham, by other writers, Choringham, and Chuham. It is now known by the name of Stony-Cross. Leland says that, in his time, (the reign of Henry VIII.) a chapel was standing near the place, most probably built by some of King William's descendants, to pray for his soul; it being the general opinion of the time, that the divine judgment for his cruelties in the forest had fallen upon him here more expressly, because here he had actually destroyed a church. No trace of such a thing is now visible, and indeed, it is one of the singularities of this spot, that so little vestige of the destroyed villages, churches, etc. is to be discovered.

Great numbers of people visit Stony-Cross in the summer. Large parties come out from Southampton, Winchester, and the neighbouring towns, and pic-nic under the trees that are scattered about; and a pleasanter place for a summer day's excursion cannot be well imagined. There is a great charm in visiting a spot marked by a singular historical event 700 years ago, and finding it so similar in all its present features.

It lies on a wide slope amongst the woods. From the Ringwood road above, splendid views over the country present themselves; not far off is a capital inn, and below are a few scattered cottages, standing amid their orchards, a picture of forest simplicity and peace. When I was there, the trees hung with loads of fruit, yet the little wooden houses stood, some of them empty

and unprotected; their inhabitants, I suppose, being out working in the woods. I sate on the trunk of a fallen tree, and contemplated them with a feeling of delight. Supposing that it might be in one of them that the descendants of the Purkess, who conveyed the king's body to Winchester, lived, I went to the only one where there appeared anybody at home to inquire, and learned that Purkess had lived at Minstead, a mile off. This village is said to have received its name from the exclamation of Rufus, when the arrow struck him;—"O myne stede!" Yet he is said to have died instantly: if therefore, this were the spot of his death, how came Minstead by the name? But the house of Purkess was at Minstead; and the man also is said to have lived near, in a small hut, and maintained his family by burning charcoal. Possibly the difficulty may be explained by what is very likely, that Purkess might be working in the wood at the time of the accident, and conveyed the body to his house, before he conveyed it thence to Winchester in his cart. The name of Purkess is not mentioned by any historian, but the fact of the body being so conveyed is, and constant tradition says that Purkess was the man, and that he received as a reward the grant of an acre or two round his hut. His male descendants have continued to occupy the same house, and carry on the same trade from that time till very recently. The last of the lineal occupiers of the hut died an old man a few years ago; his daughter had married away, and his son, having learned some other trade, had gone to Southampton to practise it; so that here a singular residence of 700 years ends. The family is said to be the most ancient in the county. It was

said that a piece of the wheel of the cart on which the body was conveyed, had always been preserved in the hut. When I asked if this were true; "Yes," said the cottager, "the old man had a curious old piece of wood that he used to shew, and when the parties were gone, he used to laugh and say, 'it did very well for the gentlemen.'" Alas! for the honour of all relics that are too shrewdly inquired into!

Much interesting information respecting this fine old forest is to be found in "Gilpin's Forest Scenery." The Rev. William Gilpin lived at Boldre, in a sweet old parsonage, in a fine situation, facing noble woods. He built and endowed a school-house there, out of the profits of the sale of his drawings, and lies buried in that churchyard. I visited his tomb with Miss Bowles, who lives near, and who, like all poetical people who live near one, has an attachment to the forest as enthusiastic as that of her venerable friend Gilpin himself.

Gilpin supposes that the peculiar breed of wild horses with which this forest abounds, are a race descended from the Spanish jenets, driven ashore on the coast of Hampshire in the dispersion of the Invincible Armada. Great quantities of these are annually taken and sold. They are useful for any kind of employment, and are remarkable for being sure-footed. The colts are either hunted down by horsemen, or caught by stratagem. He gives also a curious account of herding the hogs in this forest, which has been so frequently quoted that most readers must be familiar with it.

There is a numerous population within the limits of this forest; having got a habitation there by one

means or another. On the skirts of the forest, and round its vast heaths are numbers of poor huts, whose inmates have very little visible means of existence, but profess themselves to be woodmen, charcoal-burners, and so on; but it is pretty well understood that poaching and smuggling are their more probable vocations. Some of their cabins are the rudest erections of boughs, turf, and heather. Their poles for charcoal-burning are reared in huge pyramids with the smallest ends uppermost; and they tell a story in the forest, of a popular physician who was sent for on some urgent occasion, and coming to a certain place was met by a party of men, who told him he must submit to be blindfolded. He did not feel in a condition to resist, and therefore acquiesced in the proposal with an apparent good will, though inly not so well pleased with the adventure. He continued to see sufficiently to discover that they took him down a wild and dismal glen. It was evening; and the light of the charcoal fires was seen glimmering here and there. They came to a huge pile of poles, which the men partly removed, and led him through a sort of labyrinthine passage within them, where his bandage was removed, and he found his patient lying in the midst of a hut, which furnished plenty of evidence that it was not merely the retreat, but the depôt of smugglers. Without, however, seeming to notice anything but his patient, he prescribed, received his fee, was again bandaged, and reconducted to the spot where he had been met, and wished a very good night.

"Foresters and Borderers," says John Evelyn, "are not generally so civil and reasonable as might

be wished." And that seems to be exactly the character of those in the New Forest. Many of them, like those in the woods of America, are mere squatters, but the attempt to disturb them is much the same as to disturb a hornet's nest. Conscious that there is no strength but in making common cause, they are all up in arms at any attempt to dislodge any of them. It is not long since I read in the newspapers of an attempt of the farmers to remove some of these suspicious neighbours to a greater distance, which brought out such a host of hostile foresters against them, threatening to burn their houses over their heads, as compelled them to send for the military. This is just in keeping with the character given of them in the neighbourhood. They are a fine race of men, say they, but many of them desperate. In severe winters the distress and destitution of these wild people have sometimes been found to be beyond description, both in intensity and extent.

In this forest are nine walks, and to each a keeper. It has also two rangers, a bowbearer, and landwarden. There is also an officer of modern date in the constitution of a forest, the purveyor, appointed by the commissioners of the dockyards at Plymouth, whose business is to assign timber for the use of the navy. There are also various inferior officers, as vermin killers, etc. Many of these offices are now merely sinecures, and are held by gentlemen who rarely see the forest; the greater part of their concern with it being to receive their salaries, and the number of fat bucks belonging by prescription to the office. The lodges are handsome buildings, fit for the residence of any gentleman, and are mostly so occupied.

The one at Lyndhurst, where George III. used to take up his residence during his hunting expeditions, is a substantial brick building close to the road. In it is preserved one of the stirrups of Rufus.

> And still, in merry Lyndhurst hall,
> Red William's stirrup decks the wall;
> Who lists, the sight may see;
> And a fair stone, in green Malwood,
> Informs the traveller where stood
> The memorable tree.

In a note to this stanza of "The Red King," a poem on the death of Rufus, by William Stewart Rose, bow-bearer of the New Forest, and therefore, as he himself tells us, successor to Sir Walter Tyrrell, Mr. Rose says — "the stirrup, suspended among smoked escutcheons of the royal arms, and stags' antlers, makes a good addition to the forest ornaments of the hall of judicature. The justice-seat and bar, are of ancient and massive oak; an enormous bacon-rack, of the same age and materials, surmounts the whole. The green habits of the judge and officers assort well with the rest; and it is impossible to see a court held under this sylvan pomp and circumstance —to view the mixed and oddly accoutred rabble of people attached—to hear their defences, founded on some wild notions of natural law, delivered in an uncouth jargon, still considerably dashed with Anglo-Saxon—to observe the *sang-froid* with which they hear the decision of their judges, and, not least, to observe the prompt dispatch of justice—it is impossible, I say, to witness such a scene (as a spectator once observed to me), without being transported in imagination back to the fourteenth century."

The Commissioners of Woods and Forests have made extensive plantations in various parts of the forest, which appear in a thriving condition, and are belted with a variety of pines — Scotch, silver fir, Weymouth pine, pinasters, etc., whose contrasted foliage makes a rich appearance.

CHAPTER III.

SHERWOOD FOREST.

New Forest, as we have now seen, still retains its completeness as a forest—its herds of deer, its keepers going their daily rounds, its wild horses, and swine almost as wild, and all its ancient extent of wastes, woodlands, and forest people. A widely different condition does this once noble forést exhibit. It was more than all celebrated as the scene of the exploits of Robin Hood, and his merry men. In his day, it extended from the town of Nottingham to Whitby in Yorkshire, or rather it and the forest of Whitby lay open to each other, in perfect contiguity. At a much later day it extended far into Derbyshire; but, after many dis-afforestings and encroachments, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, it contained an equal space with that of New Forest at present. Here our Norman kings delighted to come and enjoy their hunting in summer at their palace of Clypstone, built by Henry II.; and an especially favourite place of John, whose mark upon the forest trees growing in that neighbourhood, has been repeatedly found of late years, in cutting them up for timber.

It was a pleasant region; varied with its hill and

dale, fair lakes,—some of which yet remain;—rivulets of most beautiful clearness; woods of noble growth; and the abundant Trent rolling along its southern side. In it lay Nottingham, Mansfield, Hardwick, Welbeck, Thoresby, since the birth-place of Lady Mary Wortley Montague; Newstead, the abode of Lord Byron; Annesley, the heritage of Mary Chaworth, and many an other ample domain. It was governed by a warden, his lieutenant, and a steward; a bow-bearer, and a ranger; four verderers, twelve regarders, four agistors, and twelve keepers in the main forest, under the chief forester, who held it in fee, with liberty to destroy and kill at pleasure, reserving 100 deer in each walk. There were also several woodwards for every township within the forest, and one for every principal wood. It had also five hays, or royal parks, each fenced in, and furnished with its lodge; and having each a forester, going his rounds on horseback, with a page; and two foresters on foot without a page. These hays were Best-wood, Lindby-hay, Welhay, Birkland cum Bilhay, and Clypstone. "In these hays no man commons," says the Inquisition of King Henry III., taken in the thirty-fifth year of his reign, at St. John's house in Nottingham. They were especial reserves of game for the royal use, which was not to be disturbed by the intrusion of any other men, or their cattle, on any pretence.

Besides these, there were extensive woods and demesnes: Newstead, Lyndhurst, Welbeck, Rufford, Romewood, Clumber, Kingshaghe, Carburton, Arnall, Edwinstowe, Mansfield-Woodhouse, Hye Forest, Kyegill, and Ravenshede, Bulwell Risse, Outhesland (*qy.*, the land of Robert Fitzouth, or Robin Hood's

land?) the barony of Southwell, and others, full of great woods of oak, many of them 700 years old; thirteen hundred head of red deer at the very last Inquisition, besides fallow deer without number.* All this is broken up, and dispersed as a dream. These royal hays and demesnes have been bestowed in grants by different monarchs: as Newstead by Henry VIII. to Sir John Byron; Bestwood by Charles II., to the Duke of St. Albans, his son by Nell Gwyn; and so on, or sold. The great woods have fallen under the axe; and repeated enclosures have reduced the open forest to that part which formerly went by the name of the Hye-Forest; a tract of land of about ten miles long, by three or four wide, extending from the Nottingham road, near Mansfield west, to Clipstone-park east. This tract is, for the most part, bare of trees. Near Mansfield there remains a considerable wood, Harlowe Wood, and a fine scattering of old oaks near Berry-hill, in the same neighbourhood; but the greater part is now an open waste, stretching in a succession of low hills, and long winding valleys dark

* A curious fact is apparent on the face of "A Vewe taken by special commandment from his Majesty to the Lord Warden of his forest, of all the Red Deer in this forest, 1616." The warden was obliged to maintain 100 head of red deer in each of the twelve walks —1200 in the whole. In this inquiry there proved to be 1260; but in Annesley, the property of the Chaworths, and Newstead, the property of the Byrons, there were only ten deer altogether. These Byrons and Chaworths were always notorious Nimrods, and suffered none to escape them. In Papplewick too, the adjoining parish, there were only two! The keepers indeed affirmed that "some days" there were twenty in Annesley Hills, and fourteen in Newstead Woods, but they did not appear to the Commissioners. In another "Vewe," taken in 1635, though the deer had increased in other walks, so that the total numbers were 1367, in Newstead and Annesley there were only 19!

with heather. A few solitary and battered oaks standing here and there, the last melancholy remnants of these vast and ancient woods; the beautiful springs; swift and crystaline brooks; and broad sheets of water lying abroad amid the dark heath, and haunted by numbers of wild ducks and the heron, still remain. Nature is not easily deprived of these; and in summer, when the plover and the lark build there, and send along those brown dales their merry whistle, or loud cries, and in autumn when the whole waste bursts into a blaze of crimson beauty with the blossoming heather, it is still, stripped as it is, a charming place for a contemplative ride or stroll. Here twenty years ago, Captain Cartwright might be seen following his hawks, and here still you meet a few sportsmen, with their fine dogs leaping amongst the long heather and red fern.

But at the Clipstone extremity of the forest, still remains a remnant of its ancient woodlands unrifled, except of its deer—a specimen of what the whole once was, and a specimen of consummate beauty and interest. Birkland and Bilhaghe taken together form a tract of land extending from Ollerton, along the side of Thoresby Park, the seat of Earl Manvers, to Clipstone Park, of about five miles in length, and one or two in width,—Bilhaghe is a forest of oaks; and is clothed with the most impressive aspect of age that can perhaps be presented to the eye in these kingdoms. Stonehenge does not give you a feeling of greater eld, because it is not composed of a material so easily acted on by the elements. But the hand of time has been on these woods, and has stamped upon them a most imposing character. I cannot imagine a

traveller coming upon this spot without being startled, and asking himself—"what have we got here?" It is the blasted and battered ruin of a forest. A thousand years, ten thousand tempests, lightnings, winds, and wintry violence have all flung their utmost force on these trees, and there they stand, trunk after trunk, scathed, hollow, grey, gnarled; stretching out their bare, sturdy arms, or their mingled foliage and ruin—a life in death. All is grey and old. The ground is grey beneath, the trees are grey with clinging lichens, the very heather and fern that spring beneath them have a character of the past. If you turn aside, and step amongst them, your feet sink in a depth of moss and dry vegetation that is the growth of ages, or rather that ages have not been able to destroy. You stand and look round, and in the height of summer, all is silent; it is like the fragment of a world worn out and forsaken. These were the trees under which king John pursued the red deer 600 years ago. These were the oaks beneath which Robin Hood led up his bold band of outlaws. These are the oaks which have stood while king after king reigned; while the Edwards and Henrys subdued Ireland, and ravaged Scotland and France; while all Europe was seeking to rescue Jerusalem from the Saracens; while the wars of York and Lancaster deluged the soil of all this kingdom with blood; while Henry VIII. overthrew popery, wives, ministers, and martyrs with one strong, ruthless hand; while Elizabeth, with an equal hand of unshrinking might and decision, made all Europe tremble at a woman's name, and stand astonished at a woman's jealousy, when she butchered her cousin, the Queen of Scots. Here they stood, while the monarchy of

England fell to the ground before Cromwell and the Covenanters; while Charles II., restored to his realm, but not to wisdom, revelled; while under a new dynasty, the fortunes of England have been urging through good and evil their course to a splendour and dominion strangely mingled with suffering and disquiet, yet giving prospect of a Christian glory beyond all precedent and conception. Through all this these trees have here stood silently—and here they are! monuments of ages that cannot be seen without raising in our souls remembrance of all these mighty things. To the contemplative mind they are inscribed all over with characters of strange power. They shew us at a glance, and with a palpableness which few things besides possess, how far the day of their first growth is past by; how far the ages of feudalism and civilization lie asunder. All around them, instead of that ocean of woods, heaths and morasses, come crowding up green fields, and the boundary-marks of free men; and if we were to see a hoary pilgrim suddenly make his appearance on the pavé of a great modern town, propped on his long staff, and belted in his grey robe, with his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell, we should not feel more strongly the discrepancy of life and character between him and the spruce population around him, than between these hoary and doddered oaks and the cultured country which hems them in.

But Bilhaghe is only the half of the forest-remains here: in a continuous line with it lies Birkland—a tract which bears its character in its name—the land of Birches! It is a forest perfectly unique. It is equally ancient with Bilhaghe, but it has a less dilapi-

dated air. There are old and mighty oaks scattered through it, ay, some of them worn down to the very ultimatum of ruin, without leaf or bough, standing huge masses of blackness; but the birches, of which the main portion of the forest consists, cannot boast the longevity of oaks. Their predecessors have perished over and over, and they, though noble and unrivalled of their kind, are infants compared with the oaken trunks which stand amongst them. Birkland! it is a region of grace and poetry! I have seen many a wood, and many a wood of birches, and some of them amazingly beautiful too, in one quarter or another of this fair island, but in England nothing that can compare with this. It must be confessed that the birch woods which clothe the mountain sides, beautify the glens, and stud the romantic lochs of Scotland, derive a charm from the lovely and sublime forms of those mountains, glens, and waters, which is not to be expected in this lowland country. The birch trees which rear their silvery stems, tree above tree, on the rocks of the Trosachs; the birch woods that fill the delicious valleys of Rossshire—which imparadise the glens and feather the heathery mountain-sides of Glen-More nan Alpin—the great glen of Scotland, traversed by the Caledonian Canal—thousands of summer tourists can testify with me are lovely beyond description; but Birkland has some advantages which they have not. Its trees have reached a size that the northern ones have not; and the peculiar mixture of their lady-like grace with the stern and ample forms of these feudal oaks, produces an effect most fairylandish and unrivalled.

Advance up this long avenue, which the noble

owner of this forest tract has cut through it, and looking right and left as you proceed, you shall not be able long to refrain from turning into the tempting openings that ever and anon present themselves. Enter which you please, — you cannot be wrong. You may wander for hours, and still find fresh aspects of woodland beauty. These winding tracks, just wide enough for a couple of people on horseback, or in a pony-phaeton to advance along, carpeted with a mossy turf that springs under your feet with a delicious elasticity, and closed in with shadowy trunks and flowery thickets—are they not lovely? And then you come to some sudden opening, where the long pensile branches of the birches, and the sweeping masses of oaken boughs surround and shut you in with a delectable solitude, where you may lie on the warm turf and read, or listen to the whispering leaves or the solemn sough of the forest; or a merry party of you may laugh and talk to your hearts' content, glad as the blue sky above you; and vow that you will come and pitch your tents here for a fortnight,— a jocund company, like Shakspeare's immortal troop in the forest of Arden. There never was scenery to realize more perfectly our idea of that forest. But go on: you enter on a wider expanse, on which a glorious oak stretches out its vast circumference of boughs that droop to the very ground, and form an ample tent, whose waving curtains fan you with the most grateful air. Here you come upon the solitary foot-path that crosses the forest. You hear the light clap of a gate, and presently beneath the glimpsing trees, you see some rustic personage pursuing this path, and going unconsciously past you as you stand

amongst the thickets—some old man with heavy pace, or village girl hurrying along as if those woods were still haunted by dubious things. But advance, and here is a wide prospect. The woodmen have cleared away the underwood; they have felled trees that were overtopped and ruined by their fellows; and their billets and fallen trunks, and split-up piles of blocks, are lying about in pictorial simplicity. On all sides, standing in their solemn steadfastness, you see huge, gnarled, strangly-coloured, and mossed oaks, some riven and laid bare, from summit to root, with the thunder-bolts of past tempests. An immense tree is called the Shamble-Oak, being said to be the one in which Robin Hood hung his slaughtered deer; but which was more probably used by the keepers for that purpose. By whomsoever it was so used, however, there still remain the hooks within its vast hollow. The old birches, without doubt some of the largest in England, shew like true satyrs of the woods—to the height of a man, being shagged, indented, and cross-hatched, as it were, into a most satyrly roughness, and contrast well with the higher bole, which rises clear and shining as silver to the boughs, which sweep down again to the ground in graceful lightness.

There is no end to the variety of their aspect and grouping. From the sylvan loveliness around you, you might fancy yourself in the outer wilderness of some Armida's garden. In spring, these woods are all alive with the cawing of jackdaws, which build in thousands in the hollow oaks; and as their bustle ceases as the evening falls, the nightingales are heard, and the owl and the dor-hawk come soaring through the dusky air.

It is just the region to grow poetical in. I never walk these woods without forgetting for the time all the cares of towns and common life. It is to me a palpable introduction into the old world of poetry and romance. There is a spirit and feeling of the intellectual world that falls on you as the peculiar spirit of the place. It seems to me that if Milton, Shakspeare, Spenser, and all those noble poets whose minds have moulded the better mind and character of this great country were to revisit it at times, when they had looked round them on the agitations of city-life, to some such place would they come awhile to refresh themselves with their old delights, and to hold high converse on the present fashion and prospects of humanity. Nothing seems so natural to these scenes, as to imagine their presence thus joined with the kindred spirits of a later day—Scott, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Hogg, and the like;—their religion, their passions, their doubts, their philosophical mysticism all now blended down into a heavenly nobility and union of heart and desire; their favourite fancies and pursuits still dear to them as ever, but their intellectual vision widened to the embracement of the universe. I seem to see Shelley and Keats going hand in hand along some fair glade; the one pouring out all that soul of love which possessed him, which he wished had been the foundation of the Christian religion instead of faith, and who yet, blinded by the impetuosity of youth and indignation against the despotism of priestcraft, failed to see that this same love was the very life and glory of that system;—the other young poet still uttering aloud his longings for time! time! in which to achieve an eternity of fame:—

Oh! for ten years, that I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed!

Or Lamb, speaking to those old friends of his earthly sojourn, of some fair creature met in the valleys of heaven:—

She loves to walk
In the bright regions of empyreal light,
By the green pastures and the fragrant meads,
Where the perpetual flowers of Eden bow!
By crystal streams, and by the living waters,
Along whose margin grows the wondrous tree
Whose leaves shall heal the nations; underneath
Whose holy shade a refuge shall be found
From pain and want, and all the ills that wait
On mortal life, from sin and death for ever.

But away, spirit of the woods! Time urges; the world calls: and we are thrown once more into the midst of the stirring, rushing, unceasing stream of men. These woods and their fairy-land dreams are but our luxuries; snatches of beauty and peace caught as we go along the dusty path of duty. The town has engulphed us; a human hum is in our ears; and the thoughts and the cares of life upon us once more.

CHAPTER IV.

FOREST ENCLOSURES.

Before I quit this part of my volume, let me say a word on the subject of forest enclosures. There are certain persons, who from notions of national benefit, are very desirous that all crown lands should be disposed of; and all forests and wastes enclosed. As a matter of national benefit I think them considerably mistaken. For the very highest purposes of national benefit I desire, and that most earnestly, to see them kept open. I know the logic regularly employed by these people;—to make two blades of corn grow where one grew before; to make all our lands in the highest degree productive of food. Now, if we were cattle, or sheep, the great end of whose existence it was to graze well, and get fat, then is their reasoning most excellent. But I look upon humanity as having other wants than mere physical ones. I too would have all our lands produce us food; but then it should be food of various kinds; food not only for one part, the corporeal, but for every part of our nature; and in these forests and open lands the intellectual part of the nation "have a food that these men know not of."

He who attends to our mere animal prosperity may call himself an utilitarian, but the true utilitarian comprehends in his scheme what is good for man in his integral nature; for his spiritual and intellectual needs, as well as for his bodily. But taking them on their own ground, these forest lands are not mere unproductive wastes. They supply our dockyards with an abundance of valuable timber; in them lie farms, and cottage homes, with their orchards, gardens, and little enclosures. They maintain a large population, and they pasture a vast quantity of cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. Take even such a tract as that of Dartmoor, now stripped of its trees. There cattle and sheep run in great numbers; and there lies about in inexhaustible quantities, granite, which supplies labour in shaping it, and conveying it away, to a large body of men, and goes forth to build our public works and adorn our metropolis. And there too the mines employ, again, numerous people, and send up large quantities of valuable metal. And what should we gain by an enclosure? We should gain a greater supply of corn, which the farmers and landlords now find they have actually too much of.* Having hedged about the kingdom with enactments to prevent the free importation of grain, they now find that they grow so much of it that they cannot really get a remunerating price for it. But even if we did want it, we have only to throw open our ports, and have as much as we want, at almost any price, and cattle too, which we could give our manufactures in exchange for. This is all that the most sanguine advocates of

* They did so especially in 1834, and 1835; when wheat was only 38 and 40 shillings per quarter.

universal enclosure pretend that we should gain: and then let us see what we should lose by it. In the first place, these lands would go to swell the rentals of the rich, as all others enclosed have done. The enclosure system has been one of unexampled absurdity and injustice. It has been conducted on the principle of—"Unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Unto him who could show that he had land lying in proximity to the waste about to be enclosed, has been given more, in the exact proportion to the quantity which he had. The more he had, the more was given him; and from him that had none, was taken that which he had—the custom of commoning his beasts on the waste. One would naturally have supposed that in a *christian* country there would have been a desire to provide for those who had nothing. That in every parish the waste land should have been, if allotted at all to the inhabitants, allotted to those who had most need of it. The rule has always been exactly the reverse; and the consequence has been that our poor population, stripped of their old common rights, have been thrown upon the parish; their little flock of sheep, their few cows, their geese, their pigs, all gone; and no collateral help left them to eke out their small earnings; and in case of loss of work, or sickness, no resource but parish degradation,—the consequent evil influence upon the character of the rural population has been enormous. They have a sense of injustice, if they have not the power to resist it; and when they see a system of this kind, they say—"much will have more," and their spirits are none the better for the

feeling that accompanies the melancholy truth. Now, the same system would assuredly be continued, where common allotments took place; and in the sale of crown lands, a few great persons would purchase them; a few farmers would live and pay high rents, where hundreds of comfortable cottagers now live, who would then be added to the list of paupers.

But it is not merely the poor that would lose by it. The miner, the artist, the naturalist, the poet, the antiquarian, the lover of the country, and the frequenter of it for health or relaxation, all would suffer most seriously by it, and the country would suffer with them. In the wastes of Devon and Cornwall, in those of Derbyshire, Warwickshire and Northumberland, the subterranean mass is worth, in many places, a hundred times the surface. Enclose, and cover up with cultivation these wastes, and you bury by millions the wealth of the nation, and the bread of the miners. At present, they lie open to the foot and the eye of the scrutinizing and adventurous. They can traverse heaths and mountains, and amid the barely covered rocks beneath them, or in the precipices that tower above them, they can at leisure, hunt out and discover the sparkling vein, or the dull and secret ore; and open up a fountain of labour and affluence that may run for ages. But enclose these wild regions; warn off the curious inquirers with boards threatening "prosecution as the law directs," or as may now be seen on the premises of an old lady in Surrey—that "anybody trespassing will be shot at without farther notice!"—keep them out with fences, and cover up the surface with accumulating soil and manure, and there may the riches of Provi-

dence remain buried for ever. With the researches of the miner, you restrict those of the geologist too. With the naturalist it fares the same. Every spade-graft of your cultivation annihilates the habitats and localities of animals, insects, and plants which can exist only in the unploughed wilderness. You destroy some of the most curious natural productions of your country for ever, and circumscribe some of the most healthful, heart-purifying, and spirit-cheering pursuits of men. Your ploughs and mattocks pierce through and erase immediately, the earthy mounds, the circles, the stone vestiges of far-past ages, and with them the pleasant journeys and inspiring speculations of antiquarians; as well as a great portion of the historic light and evidences of the nation. If you could root out the New Forest, you might possibly get as well supplied with timber from some other quarter, but where would you find the landscape painter such a treasury of sylvan and picturesque beauty, such delicious nooks and hollows, and fair streams winding under forest boughs? Where such groupings and endless variety of foliage and forest stems? Where such lights and shades and colours as nature there diffuses over her own regions in the everlasting circulation of the seasons; and all within six or seven hours' ride of the metropolis? I should like to know where you will find him substitutes for the naked, waste, but glorious expanses of the Surrey heaths, of Dartmoor, Stainmore, the high moors of Derbyshire, those of Northumberland, Lancashire, or of Scotland —that land which has often been called poor, but which from the influence of its wild and magnificent scenery is continually pouring out a wealth of genius

that is miraculous? Thank God! they never can pull down its mountains, and reduce them to the dead level, and quadrangular fields of cultivation; and into their fairy-land recesses there will always be a retreat from the engrossing, engulphing spirit of mercantile calculation.

But I am passing from painting to poetry; and yet, one is so blended with the other that I would ask the shrewdest person living to shew me where they totally separate. Where then, I ask, will they find substitutes for the painter, for our wild and desolate moors? There the very air in its elastic freshness is full of health and inspiration to him. There he draws an indemnity for his constitution from the deadly effects of long and close confinement in cities and painting rooms. There every turf is covered with a rude beauty to his eyes; there every rock and stone is piled in bold and inimitable shapes of savage grandeur by the spirit of nature for him; and the winds, and rains, and vegetative powers of centuries have been busy tinging them with the hues of his admiration. There, amid the sound of falling waters and the roar of coming tempests, he feels all his faculties called into power and life within him, and brings home, season after season, scenes that cover the walls of our city homes with a wild magnificence. Enclose these tracts; hem them in with walls and hedges, and he will no longer visit them. You will no longer find him sitting on some moorland stone, watching the stream which hurries with sea-like sound along its craggy bed; those rocky banks and long lines of trees that overhang it, and mark its course along the desert. He will no longer fix the solitary labourer, or the

passing group, in their own peculiar character, nor paint the lurid gloom of the storm as it comes with a frown and a thunder of rains and winds only known in such shelterless regions. And when you banish him, you banish the poet, and the lovers of poets too. It is on our moors and our mountains that the profoundest spirit of poetry dwells. There is an influence felt there, which has more than half created our Shakspeares, Miltons, Spensers, Wordsworths, Scotts, Coleridges, Shelleys, and other high spirits that have striven to elevate the English mind above the mere ordinary enjoyments of life. And is it true that any one ever felt the full charm of the works of Scott who was not familiar with heaths and mountains? Did any one ever feel all the beauty of the opening of Ivanhoe who had not often lingered in our forests? Has any one a true conception of "As you like it," of "Macbeth," or of "The Midsummer Night's Dream," of "The Fairy Queen," or of many another divine creation of the British Muse, who is not conversant with the free, beautiful, and untamed nature by whose influence they are shaped? It is one of the great offices of the poet to keep alive the love of nature; and it is, again, by a corresponding love of nature that they must be comprehended and relished. The more you reduce our whole island to a uniformity of colour and cultivation, the more effectually you extinguish this great action and reaction, which are health to the spirituality of the public mind.

We are now arrived at a crisis in which we can afford a few forests and moors to lie open; but we cannot afford to have our higher tastes and feeling

deprived of their legitimate aliment. Shut us up in towns, or within an eternal continuity of hedges and ditches, and we shall cease to be the high-souled people we are. We shall become the drudges of selfish interests, or the victims of false taste. We must have some openness, some freedom, some breathing places left us. As Abernethy said, that the parks of London were its lungs; so our mountains, forests, and moorlands are the lungs of the whole country. It is there that we rush away from counting-houses, factories, steam-engines, railroads, politics, and sectarian factions, and breathe for a season the air of physical and mental vigour; and feel the peace of nature; and drink in from all things around us a new life, a new feeling, full of the benevolent calm which is shed by its Creator over the world. Scott said he must see the heather at least once a year, or he should die. Crabbe mounted his horse in a passion of desire which could no longer be resisted, and rode fifty miles to see the sea; and more or less of this feeling lies in every bosom that is not totally dead to the true objects of life. The failing in health; the over-worn in spirit; the followers of a summer's recreation, all seek our hills and sea-coasts, and plains, where the peace or magnificence of nature, or where some celebrated monument of the past is to be found. If any one would know the extent of this delight in such things, or the numbers who indulge in it, let him go, as I have elsewhere said, to any such place in this kingdom, on any day through the summer and autumn. If we had the amount of the numbers who make a summer excursion to the sea-side, or to our moorland and mountain districts, it would be amazing. The parties who swarm along our Derbyshire valleys, and in every nook of Scot-

land, Wales, Ireland, and the Western Isles, are apparently without end.

Now this is a very healthful taste, and one, that with all our trading, manufacturing, and money-getting habits we cannot too much encourage. We complain of our countrymen seeking pleasure so much abroad, and shall we diminish the objects of popular attraction at home? No, there never was an age in which our forests and moorlands were of half the value they are of to us now. As true utilitarians, we have the strongest motives to keep them open, as we mean to keep alive the fine arts, poetry, the love of antiquity, and the love of nature amongst us; as we would retain and invigorate in us that higher life by which we have climbed to our present national altitude; by which our sages and poets have been nourished, and become the true teachers and inspirers of virtue and nobility to the world; by which we are made to feel our animal life even with a double zest; and are yet, I trust, destined to make the name of England the greatest in the history of the world.

I do not mean to say that no waste lands should be henceforth enclosed. There are plenty, every one knows, that have no particular grace or interest about them. Let them, in the name of all that is reasonable, be hedged and ditched as soon as you please; but as for the village green, the common lying near a town, the forest, and the moorland that has a poetical charm about it, felt and acknowledged by the public—may the axe and the spade that are lifted up against them be shivered to atoms, and a curse, worse than the curse of Kehama, chase all commissioners, landsurveyors, petitioning lawyers, and every species of fencer and divider out of their boundaries for ever and ever.

CHAPTER V.

WILD ENGLISH CATTLE.

We have a few herds of the original cattle which once abounded in England and Scotland, still remaining. We have long ago destroyed our wolves, bears, and boars; and it seems almost a miracle that a few of these inhabitants of our ancient forests have been preserved. They form the most interesting objects of those parts of the country where they exist. Every one knows the use Scott has made of them in the Bride of Lammermuir. There was formerly a fine herd of them at Drumlanrig in Scotland. In England they were to be found at Burton-Constable in Yorkshire; Wollaton near Nottingham; Gisburne in Craven; Lime-Hall in Cheshire; Chartley Castle in Staffordshire; and Chillingham Castle in Northumberland. That they were of the true old breed was

sufficiently testified by their common resemblance; being universally milk-white; having only the tips of their horns, and their muzzles and ears coloured. The only difference was, that in some herds, the tips of the ears, and the whole of their inside were black, in others red, or brown. What may be the numbers remaining at Lime or Gisburne, I do not know. At Wollaton they have become mixed with the common breed; but at Chartley there are about twenty of them, where they retain their ancient characteristics, and their wildness. Here, there are sundry superstitions connected with them. It is believed and asserted that if they amount to more than a certain number, or if a calf of an unusual colour is produced, some calamity happens in the family of the noble owner, Earl Ferrers. This, it is asserted, was the case when one of the earls was executed; and indeed, that every family calamity of magnitude has been thus prognosticated.

The noblest herd is to be found at Chillingham Castle, on the Northumbrian borders, the seat of Earl Tankerville. The park is well calculated for the use of such animals. It lies in a solitary country. Care seems taken to render the isolation as complete as possible;—there is not even a public-house permitted by his lordship in the small hamlet, which seems to exist just as the ancient, dependent hamlet of the feudal castle did in the feudal times themselves. The castle, a fine fabric, in true castellated style, and well befitting the classic land of Northumberland —the region of Alnwick, Warkworth, and Chevy-Chace—of the skirmishes of Douglas and Percy—of many an ancient cross, convent, battle-stone, and

hermit-cell, lies embosomed in its woods at the foot of wild hills, which ascend eastward for a mile or more, and terminate in a range of bare and craggy eminences of a fine woodland character. This steep slope between the castle and these heights is the park. Various woods and deep dells are scattered over it, so that the cattle can choose a high and airy pasture between them, where they see afar off any approach—a situation they seem particularly to enjoy; or can, at the slightest alarm, plunge into the depth of woods and glens.

Bewick, who visited them, has given capital portraits of this interesting race of cattle, and the following passages from his account of them are marked by his usual accuracy. "At the first appearance of any person, they set off in full gallop, and at the distance of two or three hundred yards make a wheel round, and come boldly up again, tossing their heads in a menacing manner. On a sudden they make a full stop at the distance of forty or fifty yards, looking wildly at the objects of their surprise; but on the least motion being made, they all again turn round, and run off with equal speed, but not to the same distance: forming a shorter circle, and again returning with a bolder and more threatening aspect than before, they approach much nearer, probably within thirty yards; when they make another stand, and again run off. This they do several times, shortening their distance, and advancing nearer, till they come within ten yards; when most people think it prudent to leave them, not choosing to provoke them further; for there is little doubt but in two or three times more they would make an attack.

"The mode of killing them was, perhaps, the only modern remains of the grandeur of ancient hunting. On notice being given that a wild bull would be killed on a certain day, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood came mounted and armed with guns, etc., sometimes to the amount of a hundred horse, and four or five hundred foot, who stood upon walls, or got into trees, while the horsemen rode out the bull from the rest of the herd, until he stood at bay; when a marksman dismounted and shot. At some of these huntings twenty or thirty of these shots have been fired before he was subdued. On such occasions the bleeding victim grew desperately furious, from the smarting of his wounds, and the shouts of savage joy that were echoing from every side: but, from the number of accidents that happened, this dangerous mode has been little practised of late years; the park-keeper alone generally shooting them with a rifled gun, at one shot.

"When the cows calve, they hide their calves for a week or ten days, in some sequestered situation, and go and suckle them two or three times a-day. If any person come near the calves, they clap their heads close to the ground, and lie like a hare in form to hide themselves. This is a proof of their native wildness, and is corroborated by the following circumstance, that happened to the writer of this narrative, who found a hidden calf of two days old, very lean and very weak. On stroking its head, it got up, pawed two or three times like an old bull, bellowed very loud, stepped back a few steps, and bolted at his legs with all his force. It then began to paw again, bellowed, stepped back, and bolted as before; but knowing its intention, he stepped aside, and it missed him,

fell, and was so very weak, that it could not rise, though it made several efforts. But it had done enough: the whole herd was alarmed, and coming to its rescue, obliged him to retire; for the dams will allow no person to touch their calves, without attacking them with impetuous ferocity.

"When any one happens to be wounded, or is grown feeble through age or sickness, the rest of the herd set upon it, and gore it to death.

"The weight of the bulls is generally from forty to fifty stone, the four quarters: of the cows about thirty. The beef is finely marbled, and of excellent flavour."

We visited the park in 1836, and were at great pains to get a sight of this noble herd. We were told that the keeper was in the park and would get us a view of it; but on going into it, we found him, and some others of the household, busily engaged in shooting fawns. For this purpose some men on horseback were galloping round a herd of deer, and driving them in a particular direction, where a keeper lay in ambush, near a narrow opening between the woods, and when they came near enough, shot with his rifle such fawns as he wanted. It was a scene of great animation: the galloping men—the keeper seen cautiously peeping out, to watch for the approach of the herd—the herd here collected into a dense group, in watchfulness and alarm—and again streaming off in a long line across the park, in some direction which seemed most to promise escape. The cries of the old—the shriller cries of the young—the sudden flash and report from the thicket—the fall of the fawn—and the flying of the herd in some other direction, made up a lively though painful scene.

But this spoiled our peculiar sport. The wild cattle, accustomed to be fired at themselves occasionally, alarmed at the sound of the guns, had retired to the most obscure woodland retreats of the park. Several persons told us that they had seen the whole herd a few minutes before, in the highest part of the park; but we traversed the woods in every direction, and penetrated into their darkest recesses without getting a glimpse of them. This we did for a couple of hours, and spite of the warnings of those who were well acquainted with them, so great was my anxiety to have a view of these fine animals. Two sawyers, who were sawing timber at a pit up in a glade of the park, told us that a few mornings before, on coming to their work, they found several bulls in the glade, which began to shake their heads and tear up the ground in a style which induced them to betake themselves to the wood as nimbly as possible. We were told too, that Mr. Landseer, while sketching some of these cattle, found it advisable to retreat more than once; and that people are not only frequently pursued, but that one man had been killed by them the previous summer. However, trusting to my ability to mount a tree, in case of need, I determined to hold on till I found them; and having thus gone through all the woods but one, not excepting Robin Hood's Cleuch, for Robin has a traditionary retreat in many a place of the north, I was certain they must be there, and therefore gave way to the remonstrances of wiser heads, and retired to a distance to watch their issuing forth. The firing of the guns in the lower part of the park had ceased, and we were assured that the cattle would not be long before they made their appear-

ance. And sure enough, in about half an hour, this grand herd of wild cattle came streaming out of this very wood. There were upwards of a hundred of them; and they spread themselves at equal distances across the steep glade, between this and the next wood, and commenced a steady graze, ever and anon lifting up a cautious head, to ascertain the actual absence of danger. It was a sight well worthy of a long journey to see. Their number, their uniformity of colour and shape, the wild shy look of the cows, the sturdy strength of the bulls—some of them of a large size—and their clear snowy hue, which made them conspicuous for many miles distant, as we occasionally turned, on our way over the moors to Wooller, and saw them still grazing in the very same spot and order. They reminded us of the herds of the sun, amongst which Ulysses' hungry crew made such havoc in the meads of Trinacria.

We were told that the hunting of the bulls had been renewed by Lord Ossulston, the eldest son of the Earl of Tankerville, with whom it was a very favourite pursuit—certainly the grandest species of chase yet left in Britain, and the only one which the sense of danger incurred can heighten and ennoble to anything like the same level as that of hunting the tiger in India, or the bear in the northern countries of Europe. It seems, as well he may, that the Earl is proud of this fine herd of cattle, and, it is said, refuses on any terms, to furnish any of his noble neighbours with a pair of them to stock their parks similarly. It is to be hoped that this interesting remnant of the native herd will long be preserved in its present magnificent number and purity of breed.

PART III.

HABITS, AMUSEMENTS, AND CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

COTTAGE LIFE.

What a mighty space lies between the palace and the cottage in this country! ay, what a mighty space between the mansion of the private gentleman and the hut of the labourer on his estate! To enter the one: to see its stateliness and extent; all its offices, out-buildings, gardens, greenhouses, hothouses; its extensive fruit-walls, and the people labouring to furnish the table simply with fruit, vegetables, and flowers; its coach-houses, harness-houses, stables, and all the steeds, draught-horses, and saddle-horses, hunters, and ladies' pads, ponies for ladies' airing-carriages, and ponies for children; and all the grooms and attendants thereon; to see the waters for fish, the woods for game, the elegant dairy for the supply of milk and cream, curds and butter, and the dairy-maids and managers belonging to them: and then, to enter the house itself, and see all its different suites of apartments, drawing-rooms, boudoirs, sleeping-rooms,

dining and breakfast rooms; its steward's, housekeeper's and butler's rooms; its ample kitchens and larders, with their stores of provisions, fresh and dried; its stores of costly plate, porcelain and crockery apparatus of a hundred kinds; its cellars of wine and strong beer; its stores of linen; its library of books; its collections of paintings, engravings, and statuary; the jewels, musical instruments, and expensive and interminable nick-nackery of the ladies; the guns and dogs; the cross-bows, long-bows, nets and other implements of amusement of the gentlemen; all the rich carpeting and fittings-up of day-rooms, and night-rooms, with every contrivance and luxury which a most ingenious and luxurious age can furnish; and all the troops of servants, male and female, having their own exclusive offices, to wait upon the person of lady or gentleman, upon table, or carriage, or upon some one ministration of pleasure or necessity: I say, to see all this, and then to enter the cottage of a labourer, we must certainly think that one has too much for the insurance of comfort, or the other must have extremely too little. If the peasant can be satisfied with his establishment, and the gentleman could not tell how to live without his, one would be almost persuaded that they could not be of the same class of animals. Knowing, however, that they are of the same species, it only shows of what elastic stuff human nature is made; into what a nutshell it can compress its cravings, and how immensely it can expand itself when the pressure of necessity is withdrawn. I am not going here to moot the old question of whereabout happiness lies in this strange disparity of circumstance; it, no doubt, lies somewhere between the extremes. It certainly cannot

be created by external superfluities. *They* lay open their possessors to the exercise of despotic power; to the corruptions of pride and luxury; to false taste, frivolous pursuits, and the diffusion of the attention over so many objects as to prevent the heart from settling firmly on any. They have a tendency to weaken the domestic attachments, and the love of solid pursuits. On the other hand, the pressure of poverty and ignorance certainly can, and too often does, lie so heavily as to destroy the relish of life's enjoyments in the cottager. Yet happiness is a fire-side thing; and the simplicity of cottage life, the fewness of its objects, and the strong sympathies awakened by its trials and sufferings, tend to condense the affections, and to strike deep the roots of happiness in the sacred soil of consanguinity. When wealth is accompanied by a desire to do good, it is a glorious and a happy destiny; when lowly life is virtuous, easy, and enlightened, it is a happy destiny too—for it is full of the strong zest of existence, and strong affections. But this is not my present subject.

When we go into the cottage of the working man, how forcibly are we struck with the difference between his mode of life and our own. There is his tenement of, at most, one or two rooms. His naked walls; bare brick, stone or mud floor, as it may be; a few wooden, or rush-bottomed chairs; a deal, or old oak table; a simple fire-place, with its oven beside it, or, in many parts of the kingdom, no other fire-place than the hearth; a few pots and pans—and you have his whole abode, goods and chattels. He comes home weary from his out-door work, having eaten his dinner under hedge or tree, and seats himself for a few hours

with his wife and children, then turns into a rude bed, standing perhaps on the farther side of his only room, and out again before daylight, if it be winter. He has no one to make a fire in his dressing-room, to lay out his clothes, to assist him in his toilet; he flings on his patched garments, washes his face in a wooden or earthen dish at the door; blows up the fire, gets ready his own breakfast, and is gone.

Such is the routine of his life, from week to week and year to year; Sundays, and a few holidays, are white days in his calendar. On them he shaves, and puts on a clean shirt and better coat, drawn from that old chest which contains the whole wardrobe of himself and children; his wife has generally some separate drawer or bandbox, in which to stow her lighter and more fragile gear. Then he walks round his little garden, if he have it; goes with his wife and children to church or meeting; to sit with a neighbour, or have a neighbour look in upon him. There he sits, his children upon his knee, and tells them how his father used to talk to *him*.

This is cottage life in its best estate; in its unsophisticated and unpauperised condition. He has no carriages, no horses, no cards of invitation, or of admittance to places of amusement; none of the luxuries, fascinations, or embellishments of life belong to him. It is existence shorn of all its spreading and flowering branches, but not pared to the quick. This is, supposing the father of the family is sober and industrious;—that he is neither a pot-house haunter, a gambler at the cockpit, a boxer, a dog-fighter, a poacher, an idle, rackety, and demoralized fellow, as thousands are. This is, supposing that he brings

home his week's wages, and puts them into the hands of his wife, as their best guardian and distributer,—saying: — "Here, my lass, this is all that I have earned; thou must lay it out for the best; *I* have enough to do to win it."

And what are these wages, out of which to maintain his family, aided by the lesser earnings of his wife, by taking in washing, helping in harvest-fields, charring in more affluent people's houses, and so on, and the earnings of the children in similar ways, or in some neighbouring factory? His own probably amount to nine, or, at most, twelve shillings, and if his family be large, and there are several workers among them, the whole united earnings may reach twenty shillings per week; a sum which will hardly find other men wherewith to pay toll-bars, or purchase gunpowder; a sum which we throw away repeatedly on some bauble; and yet, on this will a whole family maintain life and credit for a week, ay, and on much less too. In this little hut, which we should hardly think would do for a cow-shed or a hay-loft, and to which the stables of many gentlemen are real palaces, is the poor man packed with all his kindred lives, interests, and affections: and so he carries on the warfare of humanity, till He, who is no respecter of persons, calls him to stand, side by side, before his throne with the rich man who "has fared sumptuously every day."

Such are "the short and simple annals" of thousands and tens of thousands in these kingdoms; and yet what fine strapping young fellows spring up in these little cabins, men who have tilled the soil of England and wielded at home her mechanic tools, and

borne her arms abroad, till their industry and genius, under the direction of higher minds, have raised her to her present pitch of eminence; and what sweet faces and lovely forms issue thence to Sunday worship, to village feast and dance; or are seen by the evening passer-by in the light of the ingle, amid the family group, making some smoky-raftered hut a little temple of rare beauty, and of filial or sisterly affections. I often thank God, that the poor have their objects of admiration and attraction; their domestic affections and their family ties, out of which spring a thousand simple and substantial pleasures; that beauty and ability are not the exclusive growth of hall and palace; and that, in this country at least, the hand of arbitrary power dare seldom enter this charmed circle, and tear asunder husband from wife, parent from children, brother from sister, as it does in the lands of slavery. Yet our New Poor Laws have aimed a deadly blow at this blessed security; and, till the sound feeling of the nation shall have again disarmed them of this fearful authority, every poor man's family is liable, on the occurrence of some chance stroke of destitution, to have to their misfortune, bitter enough in itself, added the tenfold aggravation of being torn asunder, and immured in the separate wards of a Poverty Prison. The very supposition is horrible; and, if this system, this iron and undiscriminating system,—a blind tyranny, knowing no difference between accidental misfortune and habitual idleness, between worthy poverty and audacious imposition, between misfortune and crime,—be the product of Philanthropy, may Philanthropy be sunk to the bottom of the sea!

But the cottage life I have been speaking of, is that of the better class of cottagers; the sober and industrious peasantry: but how far short of this condition is that of millions in this empire? To say nothing of Irish cabins, the examples of what a state of destitution, misery, and squalor men may sink into; how much below this is the comfort of a Highland hut? What a contrast is there often between the cottage of an English labourer, and the *steading* of a Highland farmer. There it stands in a deep glen, between high, rocky mountains. His farm is a wild sheep-tract among the hills. Wheat, he grows none, for it is too cold and weeping a climate. He has a little patch of oats for crowdie and oat-cake; potatoes he has, if the torrent has not risen during sudden rains, so high in the glen, as to sweep his crop away. He has contrived a little stock of hay for his cows, but where it can have grown you cannot conceive, till some day, as you see a woman or a boy herding the cattle amongst the patches of cultivation,—for there are no fences between the grass and arable land —you find one or the other cutting the longer grass from the boggy waste with a sickle, and drying it often in little sheaves as our farmers dry corn. But the house itself;—it is a little, low, long building of mud, or rough stones; the chimney composed of four short poles wrapped round with hay-bands; a flat stone laid upon it to prevent the smoke being driven down into the hut by the tempestuous winds from the hills; and another stone laid upon that, to keep it from being blown away. The roof is thatched with bracken, with the roots outermost; or often the same roof is a patchwork of bracken, ling, broom, and turf.

A little window of perhaps one pane of thick glass, or of four of oiled paper. The door, which reaches to the eaves, is so low that you must stoop to enter; and the smoke is pouring out of it faster than it ascends from the chimney. A few goats are, most likely, lying or standing about the door. You enter, and as soon as you can discern anything through the eternal cloud of smoke, you most probably find yourself in a crowd. The fire of peat lies in the centre of the hut, surrounded by a few stones; wooden benches are nailed on one side against the wall, and the other is partitioned off like a large wooden cupboard, with sliding doors or curtains, for the family bed, as you find all over Scotland, and even in Northumberland. The pigs are running about the floor; hens are roosting over your head; the cows are lowing in, what we should call, the parlour; nine or ten children, or weans, as they call them, and a callant, or boy, who teaches the weans, and the father and mother, and very probably their father and mother, or one of them, in extreme age, are fixing their eyes on the stranger.

It was but last year that Mrs. Howitt and myself passed the night in such a dwelling, and a slight notice of the place may present, to many of our readers, a new view of cottage life. It was in Rossshire, some thirty or forty miles north-west of Inverness, at a spot called the Comrie, lying between Loch Echilty and Loch Luichart. A wild, and yet most beautiful spot it was,—a little strath opening itself out between the wooded mountains which surround Loch Echilty, and the bare stony hills in the direction of Strath Conan. We came upon it after wan-

dering through the delicious fairyland of birch woods that clothe that Loch in the very romance of picturesque beauty, springing up amongst the wildest chaos of crags, here hanging over the water, and here surrounding the ruinous blackness of some solitary hut, that, but for children playing before it, would appear to have been tenantless for years. A stern defile guarded by vast masses of projecting rocks, by places clothed with the richest drapery of crimson heather, by places naked and lividly grey, and height above height still scattered with climbing birch trees, brought us to a little nameless loch hidden in the woods, girt with a dense margin of reeds, and covered with the most magnificent display of white water-lilies, and then appeared two of those little huts in this Highland solitude. The evening was rapidly sinking into night, and we were uncertain how far it was to the next inn. Two women appeared at the door of one of the huts, and rather startled us with the information, that the nearest inn in the way we proposed to go, was distant five-and-twenty miles! That another mile brought us to the ferry over the Conan, where the carriage road ceased, and all beyond was mountain and moorland waste. We seemed, as it were, to be on the very verge of civilization; and there appeared to be nothing for us, but to retrace our way for some miles, or to take up our lodging in this house.

Weary as we were, this appeared the less objectionable alternative, and we accepted the offer which the elder woman made us. The moment we did so, the poor woman seemed struck with the rashness of her act. "What shall I do for the like of you?

What shall I find for the like of you?" We assured her we should not be very fastidious guests, and in we went. It was such a hut as I have just described. The fire lay on a hearth of stones, with a few large stones built up against the mud wall to prevent the house from being burnt. The woman's husband, a farmer, was gone into Morayshire with lambs; a hired shepherd sat on the side of the partitioned bed, such as I have already described; two fine sheep-dogs lay before the fire, and a troop of bare-legged and kilted boys came running in from some distant school. They were Macgregors, having come hither from Dumbartonshire, and could, fortunately for us, speak English. We sate on a bench in the ingle, and all these little Macgregors, Grigor Macgregor, Peter and Duncan and the rest, squatted on the mud-floor and alternately watched us and their eldest sister, a fine bare-legged lassie of eighteen, who was busy baking oatcakes for us. It was a hot post both for herself and for us. She put on peats till the hut was like an oven, and the smoke made our eyes smart almost past endurance. Yet we watched the progress of her operation with great interest, as she made a paste of oatmeal and water, rolled it out in cakes, cut it into segments, baked them on an iron girdle over the fire, and then reared them before the glowing peats to make them crisp. This done, she found us some tea, and that was our supper. They had two or three cows, but their milk was already in the process of being converted into cheese; the potatoes and the oats of the last crop were exhausted, and the wet season had prevented the ripening of the present. "There was," said our hostess, "a great cry in the

country for food!" Our fatigue, and this announcement, induced us to think we fared well. They made us a comfortable bed in the spence, where we found four Gaelic Bibles, and the History of Robinson Crusoe! Early in the morning we pursued our way; but ere we took our leave, the poor woman came in from fetching up her cows, her clothes wet to the very knees. When we expressed our surprise—"O," said she, "that is what we are used to every day of our lives. While you have been in your bed, the herdboy has three times gone round the corn-fields with his dogs, to chase away the stags and roes into the woods. The last thing every night, while the corn is growing in the field, he goes round—once again at midnight, and then at the earliest dawn of day. Every night it must be done, or a green blade would not be left. If you went in the gloaming with the man into the wood, sir, you would see twenty stags as big as our cows. Oh, it's an awful place for wild beasts—foxes and badgers, and serpents: did you ever see a serpent ma'am? Sometimes in a morning they rear themselves up in a narrow path, and hiss at me bitterly." As the poor woman spoke, we stood at the door of her little tenement, and saw the heavy dew lie glittering on the grass all round; and the primitive cheese-press, consisting of a pole, one end of which was thrust into a crevice of a rock, and the other weighted with a huge stone; and around us were the heathy mountains and the woods; the mists and clouds clinging to the sides of wild hills, or rolling away before the breeze of morning; and the sound of the neighbouring torrent alone disturbing the deep solitude. We could not avoid feeling how

far was all this from the cottage-life of England. We gave the poor woman what we thought a fitting return for her hospitality, and left her overwhelmed with a grateful astonishment, which showed what was there the real value of money.

This is a scene in the scale of comfort far below the general run of labourers' houses in England; but yet how far, infinite far lower, do many of our working people's abodes sink. What dens have we in manufacturing towns! What little, filthy, dismal, yet high-rented dens! What cabins do some of our colliers and miners inhabit! What noisome, amphibious abodes abound in our fishing villages, such as Crabbe has painted! What places have I seen in different parts of England, which everywhere obtain the name of *Rookeries*,—huge piles built for some purpose which has not answered; or some deserted hall, let off in little tenements; the windows broken, and stopped with old rags and hats; the ground all round trodden down, covered with ash-heaps; a few stunted bushes, or gooseberry trees, where once had been a garden, displaying the ragged and tattered wash of the indigence of indigence: altogether exhibiting such an air of poverty as impoverishes one's very spirit, and fills it with a nameless feeling of disgust and despondence for days after. Such a place I particularly recollect seeing somewhere between Netherby and Gretna-Green; and, observing an old man "daundering about," as he called it, as without hope and object, I asked him how this place came to look so forlorn—"O," said he, "we once could run our cows on the waste, and did very well, but that is taken away. Sir James asked the steward what the

poor people must do, 'O, they will all hooly* away,' said he; but where are we to hooly to?"

Ah! cottage life! There is much more hidden under that name than ever inspired the wish to build *cottages ornées*, or to inhabit them. There is a vast mass of human interests within its circle, of which the world takes little note. The loves and hopes; the trials and struggles; the sufferings, deaths and burials; the festivities and religious confraternities; the indignities that fret, and the necessities that compel to action and union our simple brethren and sisters. How little is truly known; how much is consequently misjudged; how wide is the indifference concerning them in those who have the power to work miracles of love and happiness amongst them, and must one day stand with them at the footstool of our common Father, who will demand of his children how each has loved his brethren.

Let us turn our eyes, however, a moment from the dark side to the light one. There is not a more beautiful sight in the world than that of our English cottages, in those parts of the country where the violent changes of the times have not been so sensibly felt. Where manufactures have not introduced their red, staring, bald brick houses, and what is worse, their beershops and demoralization: where, in fact, a more primitive simplicity remains. There, on the edges of the forests, in quiet hamlets and sweet woody valleys, the little grey-thatched cottages, with their gardens and old orchards, their rows of bee-hives,

* Slip quietly away. A word often found in the old Border Ballads, as "Then hooly, hooly up she rose," etc.

and their porches clustered with jasmines and roses, stand:—

> Hundreds of huts
> All hidden in a sylvan gloom,—some perched
> On verdant slopes from the low coppice cleared;
> Some in deep dingles, secret as the nest
> Of Robin Redbreast, built amongst the roots
> Of pine, on whose tall top the throstle sings.
> Hundreds of huts, yet all apart, and felt
> Far from each other; 'mid the multitude
> Of intervening stems; each glen or glade
> By its own self a perfect solitude,
> Hushed, but not mute.
>
> *John Wilson.*

There they stand, and give one a poetical idea of peace and happiness which is inexpressible. Well may they be the admiration of foreigners. In many of the southern counties, but I think nowhere more than in Hampshire, do the cottages realize, in my view, every conception that our poets have given us of them. One does, no doubt, when looking on their quiet beauty, endow them with a repose and exemption from mortal sufferings that can belong to no human dwelling; and Professor Wilson, in his poem called an "Evening in Furness Abbey," which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, September, 1829, —a poem flushed all over with the violet hues of poetry, and overflowing with tenderness and grace, gives one this very delightful expression of a thought which has occurred to many of us—

> The day goes by
> On which our soul's beloved dies! The day
> On which the body of the dead is stretched
> By hands that decked it when alive; the day
> On which the dead is shrouded; and the day
> Of burial—one and all go by! The grave

> Grows green ere long; the church-yard seems a place
> Of pleasant rest, and all the cottages,
> That keep for ever sending funerals
> Within its gates, look cheerful every one,
> As if the dwellers therein never died,
> And this earth slumbered in perpetual peace.

But sobering down by such sad, yet sweet thoughts as these, our poetical fancies of cottage life, and bringing them within the range of human trouble and suffering, still these rustic abodes must inspire us with ideas of a peace and purity of life, in most soothing contrast with the hurry and immorality of cities. Blessings be on them wherever they stand, in woodland valleys, or on open heaths, throughout fair England; and may growing knowledge bring growth of happiness, widening the capacity of enjoyment without touching the simplicity of feeling and the strength of principle. Well may the weary wayfarer—

> Lean on such humble gate and think the while,
> O! that for me some home like this would smile;
> Some cottage home to yield my aged form,
> Health in the breeze, and shelter in the storm.

There are thousands of them inhabited by woodmen, labourers, or keepers, that are fit dwellings for the truest poet that ever lived; and it is the *ideal* of these picturesque and peace-breathing English cottages that has given origin to some of the sweetest paradises in the world—the cottages of the wealthy and the tasteful. What most lovely creations of this description now abound in the finest parts of England, with their delicious shrubberies, velvet lawns, hidden walks, and rustic garden-huts; their little paddocks lying amid woods, and skirted with waters; spots

breathing the odour of dewy flowers, and containing in small space all the elegance and the country enjoyments of life.

Happiness, it is true, is not to be dragged into such places; but what places they are for the genuine lover of the country to invite her into! The very feeling of the cumbrous pomp and circumstance of aristocratic establishments in this country, makes one think of such sweet hermitages with a sense of relief and congratulation. What more charming abode has the wide earth for a spirit soothing itself with the pleasures of literature and the consolation of genuine religion, far from the wranglings of political life, than such a one as the cottage of Miss Bowles, at Buckland, on the border of the New Forest; of Miss Mitford, at Three-Mile-Cross; or that of Wordsworth at Rydal? But we must quit these earthly paradises to speak of other things.

CHAPTER II.

POPULAR FESTIVALS AND FESTIVITIES.

What a revolution of taste has taken place in the English people as it regards popular festivals and festivities! Our ancestors were passionately fond of shows, pageants, processions, and maskings. They were fond of garlands and ribbons, dancing and festive merriment. May-day, Easter, Whitsuntide, St. John's Day, Yule, and many other times, were times of general sport and gaiety. Music and flowers abounded; mumming, morris-dancing, and many a quaint display of humour and frolic spread over the country. The times, and the spirit of the times, are changed:—we are become a sober people. England is no longer merry England, but busy England; England full of wealth and poverty—extravagance and care. There has been no small lamentation over this change; and many of our writers have laboured hard to bring us once more to adopt this state of things. They might as well attempt to bring back jousts and tourneys, popery, and government without representation. The times, and the spirit of the times are changed. Strutt,

Hone, Leigh Hunt, Miss Laurence, and many others, may expatiate on the poetic beauty of these things: they may deplore the extinction of this graceful rite, that jocund festivity, and pray as earnestly to resume them once more; but can they give us our light hearts again? Can they make the nation young again? Can they make us the simple, ignorant, confiding people, living in the present, careless of the future, as our ancestors were? Till they can do this, they must lament and exhort us in vain. As soon might they bid the sun retrace his path; the seasons reverse their course; earth and heaven turn back in the path of their years. What our ancestors were, they were from circumstances that are gone for ever; and what we are, we are from another mighty succession of circumstances, of which the memory and effect may no more be blotted out, than the stars can be blotted out of the clear heavens of midnight. The country has passed through deep baptisms, and processes of fermentation which have worked out the lighter external characters, and totally re-organised the moral as well as the political constitution of the kingdom. The better qualities of the old English character I trust we fully retain, but the more juvenile and fantastic ones are irrevocably destroyed in the shock of most momentous convulsions.

Amongst the many attempts to account for the sedater cast of the modern popular mind, Mr. Bulwer, in "England and the English," has attributed it to the spread of Methodism. Had he attributed it to Puritanism he would have been nearer the mark. Methodism may possibly have done something towards it, but it neither began early enough, nor spread uni-

versally enough, to have the credit of this change. The decay of popular festivities has been noticed and lamented by writers for the last century. It has been going on both before and since the rise of Methodism, with much the same pace of progression, and is equally felt where Methodism is not allowed to shew its face, as where it exercises its fullest power. Over what a great extent of this country does the influence of high-church landlords prevail, where Methodism cannot get footing; where the people are all expected to go soberly to church as in the good old times; and yet there the people are just as grave, have grown out of the sports and pastimes of their ancestors, just as much as in the most Methodistic districts. In the manufacturing districts, where the Methodists have gained most influence, it is true enough that they have helped to expel an immense quantity of dog-fighting, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, badger-baiting, boxing, and such blackguard amusements; but May-ing, guising, plough-bullocking, morris-dancing, were gone before, or would have gone had not Methodism appeared.

Mighty and many are the causes which have wrought this great national change;—causes which have been operating upon us for the last 300 years; and are so intimately connected with our whole national progress, political and intellectual—with all our growing greatness, with all our glory and our sorrows, that had not Methodism existed, that character would have been exactly what it is.

The Reformation laid the foundation of this change. While we had an absolute pope, and an absolute king; while the people were neither educated, nor

allowed to read the Bible, nor to be represented in parliament; while the monarch and a few noble families held all the lands of the kingdom, the lower classes had nothing to do but to follow their masters to the wars, or live easily and dance gaily in times of peace. The retainers of great houses, the labourers in the fields, foresters and shepherds following their solitary occupations, constituted the bulk of the nation. Merchants and merchandise were few; our great trading towns and interests did not exist; the days of newspapers, of religious disputes, of literature and periodicals were not come. The people were either at work or at play. When their work was over, play was their sole resource. They danced, they acted rude plays and pantomimes, with all the zest and gaiety of children, for their heads were as unoccupied with knowledge and grave concerns as those of children. They lived in poverty it may be, but still they lived in that state of simplicity and dependence which left them little care, and they were cut off by the impossibility of rising out of their original rank from all troublesome excitement. It was equally the concern of the civil government and the hierarchy to encourage sports and festivities, to keep them out of dangerous inquiries into their own condition, or rights. In the great feudal halls, the minstrel, the jongleur, the jester, and other ministers of gaiety; hawks and hounds abroad, jollity and drinking at home, kept the minds of all idlers occupied with matters to their taste. The clergy and monks promoted with an equal zeal of policy, the festivals of saints, keeping of high days and holidays, processions, games, and even acting the mysteries and miracle-plays. While the system con-

tinued, this spirit and national character must have continued likewise; but the Reformation burst like a volcano from beneath, and scattered the whole smiling surface into disjointed fragments, or buried it beneath the lava of ruin.

Henry VIII. at once destroyed Monkery and the Catholic church. He at once seized on the ecclesiastical lands, and snapped asunder the ecclesiastical policy. The translation of the Bible let in a flood of light that revealed all the phantasmagoria of the past, and prepared a train of everlasting inquiries, disquietudes, and intellectual and political triumphs for the future. The people saw they had been treated as children, but they now awoke to the passions and the conscious power of men. They had tasted of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and their eyes were opened to their actual condition, never more to be closed. The lands that were rudely seized and arbitrarily distributed, created a new class in the community—the gentry—a link between the aristocracy and the people;—possessing the knowledge of the one, and sharing the interests of the other. Henry's predecessors had hastened this new era by curtailing the wealth and power of the nobility; and the long wars of the houses of York and Lancaster had already done much of this work for him; exterminating some, humbling others, and embarrassing with debts the remainder. So were the elements of a more popular career thrown into the midst of the nation; and the religious persecutions on the Continent, by sending us swarms of jewellers, weavers, and other artificers, laid the foundation of those trading propensities which have now carried us to such a

marvellous length. We came to be a trading and colonizing people, and to possess a fleet in order to protect our new interests. How rapidly this navy grew, indicating by its own growth that of the general wealth and commercial enterprise of England, of which it was the consequence, is seen by this circumstance. In that fine old ballad of Sir Andrew Barton, Lord Howard is made to say to Henry VIII. in 1511—

> Sir Andrew's shipp I bring with mee;
> A braver shipp was never none;
> *Now hath your grace two shipps of warr,*
> *Before in England was but one!*

This one was the *Great Harry*, built in 1504. In about 80 years only afterwards, the English had thirty vessels of war at sea, and with these dared to attack the Invincible Armada of Spain, consisting of one hundred and thirty vessels, and by the assistance of a providential tempest, totally dispersed and destroyed it. Then Howard of Effingham, Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins, were the names of our commanders,—names which thenceforward filled all the known world with terror, and gave to England the empire of the seas. With this extension of national interests, a more active and earnest spirit was diffused through the people. The struggle with enemies abroad, and with the rapidly maturing spirit of religious freedom at home, kept Elizabeth engaged, and induced in her a rigour of persecution, and in the people a rigour of resistance and the soul of martyrdom. Before the development of these antagonist powers, all lightness fled; singing gave way to preaching and listening; dancing, to running anxiously to know the fate of sufferers, and the

doctrines of fresh-springing teachers. So completely had the old relish for merriment and pastimes died out, that her successor, James, endeavoured to compel the people, by the publication of his "Book of Sports" to be jocose and gamesome. But it would not do. The soul of the people was now up in arms for their rights; and the despotic nature of himself and his son, resisting its claims, kept up such a fever of political strife in the kingdom as would have put out all jesting and capering if they had not gone before. The hierarchy fell,—fell in one wide chaos of civil contention; and, as if torrents of blood, and volumes of fire, and the trampling hoofs of thousands of careering cavalry had not been enough to overwhelm and dash to pieces every remaining fragment of jollity and popular fête,—in came Puritanism from Geneva; and the Solemn League and Covenant from Scotland. There was a final close to all the pageantry of processions, and the merry saintliness of festivals: they were denounced and abhorred as the carnality of Anti-Christ, and the rags of the scarlet woman. Charles II. indeed, could revive licentiousness, but he could not bring back the holiday guise of "the old profession." And what has been the course of England since? One ever-widening and ascending course of mighty wars, expanding commerce, vast colonization, and the growth of science, literature, and general knowledge. We are no longer a nation of feudal combatants, of piping shepherds, and thoughtless peasantry,—but of busy, scheming, money-collecting, family-creating men. Our last tremendous war put the climax to this amazing career. In it all Europe seemed torn to pieces and organized anew. We, as a people, were led by cir-

cumstances to put forth the most stupendous energies that perhaps any nation ever did. To defend our colonies; to support the interests of our allies with arms and subsidies; to supply the whole of Europe with all species of manufactures, and almost all species of merchandize, and through this demand stimulating into existence the powers of steam and machinery, a population of amazing numbers to maintain. And then, the shock and the revulsion when this great war-system suddenly ceased! An immense debt, vast taxes, the necessity of maintaining high prices, the necessity of boundless competition and low wages that we might so compete with the continent, returning to its old habits.

Who does not know with what a fiery force this has fallen on the working classes? What distress, what pauperization, what desperation, brought to the very pitch of rebellion, they have gone through; and recollecting this, can any one think otherwise than that it has been enough to sober any people that is not destitute of every element of high character. If we could, after a baptism like this, be still like the French, a dancing, dissipation-loving people, we should, like them, have but a fitful care to secure our liberties, and the comforts of good government; like them, at this moment, we should be the victims of successive revolutions, yielding no fruit but tyranny. But we are a sober and a thoughtful people, and are therefore working out of the mass of our difficulties the form of a renewed constitution, adapted to our present enlarged views and experience. But besides this, our energies have not been called forth for this good end alone; they have brought with their exercise a high relish for

intellectual pleasures. Our minds have been stirred mightily, and, like animals that during their wintry torpor feel no hunger, yet feel it keenly the moment they are awake, they have become hungry for congenial aliment. We have fed on much knowledge, and are no longer children, but full-grown men, with manly appetites and experienced tastes. Could we now sit, as our ancestors did, for nine hours together at a mystery? Could we endure to read through the chronicles and romances of the middle ages,—books which spun out their recitals to the most extraordinary length, and were never too long; for books then were few? If we could not, so neither could the simple pleasures and rural festivities satisfy the peasantry of this. We are the creatures of new circumstances, and of a higher reach of knowledge. A combination of causes, too puissant to be resisted, has made hopeless all return to the juvenilities of the past. And after all, happiness —of which the people, however unwisely, are always in quest, does not consist in booths and garlands, drums and horns, or in capering round a May-pole. Happiness is a fire-side thing. It is a thing of grave and earnest tone; and the deeper and truer it is, the more is it removed from the riot of mere merriment:

> The highest mood allowed
> To sinful creatures, for all happiness
> Worthy that holy name, seems steeped in tears,
> Like flowers in dew, or tinged with misty hues,
> Like stars in halo.
>
> *John Wilson.*

And the more our humble classes come to taste of the pleasures of books and intellect, and the deep fire-side affections which grow out of the growth of heart

and mind, the less charms will the outward forms of rejoicing have for them. Beautiful and poetical, I grant, are many of the old rites and customs of which we have been speaking; but they are beautiful and poetical as belonging to their own times,—and many of them, I am inclined to believe, as seen in the distance; for, seen at hand, there is a vulgarity in most popular customs that offends invariably our present tastes. Nor do I mean to say that our present population cannot be cheerful. A more truly cheerful people never existed; and they can dance and be merry too when they will; as Christmas, and Whitsuntide, and their annual village feasts, and their harvest-homes can testify. Since the Reformation, the saints of the calendar having become mere names in this country, their festivals have accordingly died away. Whitsuntide, Easter, and Christmas seem almost all that have maintained their stand; and of these we will speak a little; but in the first place, let us have a few words on May-day.

CHAPTER III.

MAY-DAY.

MAY-DAY was celebrated with a gaiety and poetical grace far beyond all other festivals. It had come down from the pagan times with all its Arcadian beauty, and seemed to belong to those seasons more than to any Christian occasions. It is one that the poets have all combined to lavish their most delicious strains upon. The time of the year was itself so inspiring,—with all its newness of feeling, its buds and blossoms and smiling skies. It seemed just the chosen period for heaven and earth and youth to mingle their gladness together. There is no festivity that is so totally gone! Washington Irving, in his very interesting account of his visit to Newstead Abbey, takes the opportunity to say, that he had been accused by the critics of describing in his Sketch Book popular manners and customs that had gone by, but that he had found those very customs existing in this neighbourhood. That those who doubted the accuracy of his statements must come north of the Trent. That here he found May-poles standing in the old-

fashioned villages, and a band of plough-bullocks even came to the abbey while he was there.

Washington Irving certainly seemed most agreeably impressed with the primitive air of this part of Nottinghamshire, and it is interesting to see the effect which places most familiar to you, produce on the minds of strangers of taste and poetical feeling. His delight at finding himself in old Sherwood, the haunt of Robin Hood; in hearing the bells of Mansfield at a distance; and his remarking the names of Wagstaff, Hardstaff, Beardall, as names abounding about the forest, naturally suggesting the character of those who first bore them—names so common to our eyes as never to have awakened any such idea. All this is very agreeable; but let no lover of ancient customs come hither on the strength of Washington Irving's report, unless he means to travel much farther north of the Trent than Newstead. There is certainly a May-pole standing in the village of Linby near Newstead, and there is one in the village of Farnsfield near Southwell; but I have been endeavouring to recollect any others for twenty miles round, and cannot do it, and though garlands are generally hung on these poles on May-day, wreathed by the hands of some fair damsel who has a lingering affection for the olden times, and carried up by some adventurous lad, alas! the dance beneath it, where is it? In the dales of Derbyshire, May-poles are more frequent, but the dancing I never saw. In my own recollection, the appearance of morris-dancers, guisers, plough-bullocks, and Christmas carollers, has become more and more rare, and to find them we must go into the retired hamlets of Staffordshire, and the dales of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

One would have thought that the May-day fête would have outlasted all others, except it were Christmas, on the strength of the poetical wealth of heart and fancy woven with it through our literature. Every writer of any taste and fancy has referred with enthusiasm to May-day. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Fletcher, Milton, Browne, Herrick, and all our later poets, have sung of it with all their hearts. Chaucer, in Palamon and Arcite, describes Arcite going to the woods for garlands on May morning, according to the old custom. He

> Is risen, and looketh on the merry day;
> And for to do his observance to May,
> Remembering on the point of his desire,
> He on the courser, starting as the fire,
> Is risen to the fieldés him to playe;
> Out of the court were it a mile or tway:
> And to the grove of which that I you told,
> By Aventine his way began to hold,
> To maken him a garland of the greves,
> Were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn leaves,
> And loud he sung, against the sunny sheen:
> "Oh May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
> Right welcome be thou, fairé, freshé May;
> I hope that I some green here getten may."
> And from his courser with a lusty heart,
> Into the grove full hastily he start,
> And in a path he roamed up and down.

Milton has many beautiful glances at it, and Shakspeare touches on it in a hundred places, as in "The Midsummer Night's Dream:"

> If thou lovest me then,
> Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
> And in a wood, a league without the town,
> Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
> To do observance to a morn of May,
> There will I stay for thee.

The European observance of this custom is principally derived from the Romans, who have left traces of it in all the countries they subdued. It was their festival of Flora. It was the time in which they sacrificed to Maia; and in Spain, where this custom seems to remain much as they left it, the village-queen still is called Maia. But we have traces of it as it existed amongst the Saxons, whose barons at this time going to their Wittenagemote, or Assembly of Wise Men, left their peasantry to a sort of saturnalia, in which they chose a king, who chose his queen. He wore an oaken, and she a hawthorn wreath; and together they gave laws to the rustic sports, during those sweet days of freedom. The May-pole too, or the column of May, was the grand standard of justice amongst these people, in the EY-COMMONS, or fields of May: and the garland hung on its top, was the signal for convening the people. Here it was that the people, if they saw cause, deposed or punished their governors, their barons and kings. It was one of the most ancient customs, which, says Brande, has by repetition been from year to year perpetuated.

But we have traces also of its mode of celebration among our Druid ancestors, for it is certainly one of the old customs of the world, having come down from the earliest ages of Paganism through various channels. Dr. Clarke in his Travels, vol. ii. p. 229, has shown that the custom of blowing horns on this day, still continued at Oxford, Cambridge, London, and other places, is derived from a festival of Diana. These ancient customs of the country did not escape the notice of Erasmus when in England, nor the ceremony of placing a deer's head upon the altar of St.

Paul's church, which was built upon the site of a temple of Diana, by Ethelbert king of Kent. Mr. Johnson, in his "Indian Field Sports," also states the curious circumstance, that the Hindoos hold a vernal feast called Bhuvizah, on the 9th of Baisach, exclusively for such as keep horned cattle for use or profit, when *they erect a pole and adorn it with garlands;* and perform much the same rites as used to be adopted by the English on the first of May. Thus it appears how ancient and how widely spread was this custom; and its celebration by the Druids and Celts, point it out as belonging to the worship of the sun. In Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland, the people still kindle fires on the tops of their mountains on this day, called Beal Fires, and the festival then celebrated Beltane, or Bealtane. The practice is to be traced in the mountainous and uncultivated parts of Cumberland, amongst the Cheviots, and in many parts of Scotland. Mr. Pennant says—"On the first of May, in the Highlands of Scotland, the herdsmen of every district hold their Beltein. They cut a square trench in the ground, leaving the turf in the middle. On that they make a fire of wood, on which they dress a large caudle of eggs, butter, oatmeal, and milk, and bring, besides the ingredients of the caudle, plenty of beer and whisky; for each of the company must contribute something. The rite begins with spilling some of the caudle on the ground, by way of libation. On that every one takes a cake of oatmeal, on which are raised nine square knobs, each dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preserver of their flocks and herds; or to some particular animal, the real destroyer of them. Each person

then turns his face to the fire, breaks off a knob, and flinging it over his shoulder, says—"This I give to thee; preserve thou my sheep;—this I give to thee; preserve thou my horses:" and so on. After that they use the same ceremony to the noxious animals—"This I give to thee O Fox! spare thou my lambs; this to thee O hooded Crow! this to thee Eagle!" When the ceremony is over they dine on the caudle, etc. etc.

Something of this kind is retained in Northumberland, in the syllabub prepared for the May-feast, which is made of warm milk from the cow, sweet cake, and wine; and a kind of divination is practised by fishing with a ladle for a wedding-ring, which is dropped into it for the purpose of prognosticating who shall be first married. This divination of the wedding-ring is practised in the midland counties on Christmas eve; and they have a peculiar kind of tall pots made expressly for this purpose, called posset-pots. I have myself fished for the ring on many a merry Christmas eve.

One cannot avoid seeing in these ceremonies their most ancient origin and consequently wide-spread adoption. The throwing over the shoulder offerings to good and evil powers is exactly that of all savage nations, the effect of one uniform tradition. The American Indians, indeed, seldom propitiate the good, but are very careful to appease, or prevent the evil Manitou. These notions have, no doubt, everywhere contributed to connect ideas of the presence and power of spiritual and fairy creatures, and the extraordinary license of witchcraft on this night and day. We cannot avoid thinking of the wizard rites of the

Blocksburg in Germany, made so familiar by Goëthe; and we see the reason why all houses were defended by forest boughs, gathered with peculiar ceremonies, and worn by the young on May-eve in almost every European country.

What then were the exact ceremonies of May-day? The Romans celebrated the feast of Flora in this manner. The young people went to the woods, and brought back a quantity of boughs with which they adorned their houses. Women ran through the streets, and had the privilege of insulting every one who came in their way. And here may we not see the custom, still continued in France, though fallen into desuetude here, of the *epousées* (brides) of the month of May? The *epousées* are the little daughters of the common people, dressed in their best and placed on a chair, or bank, in the streets and public walks, on the first Sunday in May. Other little girls, the brides' companions, stand near with plates, and tease the passengers for some money for their *epousées*.

Like the Romans, then, our ancestors celebrated May-day as a festival of the young. The youth of both sexes rose shortly after midnight, and went to some neighbouring wood, attended by songs and music, and breaking green branches from the trees, adorned themselves with wreaths and crowns of flowers. They returned home at the rising of the sun, and made their windows and doors gay with garlands. In the villages they danced during the day round the May-pole, which was hung to the very top with wreaths and garlands, and afterwards remained the whole year untouched, except by the seasons,—a fading emblem and consecrated offering to the God-

dess of Flowers. At night the villagers lighted up fires, and indulged in revellings, after the Roman fashion. In this country they added the pageant of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, with Friar Tuck, Will Stutely, and others of their merry company; the dragon and the hobby-horse,—all of which may be found fully described in Strutt's Queenhoo-Hall.

Spenser and Herrick give very graphic pictures of these popular festivities, which I shall here give; and first, Spenser from the Shepherds' Calendar.

Young folke now flocken in everywhere
To gather May buskets,* and smelling brere;
And home they hasten the posts to dight,
And all the kirk pillars, ere daylight:
With hawthorne buds, and sweet eglantine,
And garlands of roses, and sops-in-wine.
Sicker this morrow, no longer agoe,
I sawe a shole of shepherds outgoe
With singing and shouting, and jolly chere;
Before them rode a lustie tabrere,
That to the many a hornpipe played,
Wherto they dauncen, eche one with his mayd.
To see these folks make such jovisaunce
Made my heart after the pipe to daunce.
Tho to the greene-wood they speeden hem all,
To fetchen home May with their musicall,
And home they bringen, in a royall throne,
Crowned as king, and his queen attone
Was Lady Flora, on whome did attend
A fayre flock of faeries, and a fresh band
Of lovely nymphs. O that I were there
To helpen the ladies their May-bush beer!

Herrick's poem is in the form of a lover inviting his sweetheart to go out a May-gathering.

* Bushes.

CORINNA'S GOING A-MAYING.

Get up, get up for shame: the blooming morn
Upon her wings presents the God unshorn:
See how Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-quilted colours through the air:
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see
The dew bespangling herb and tree.

Each flower has wept and bowed towards the east
Above an hour ago, yet you not dressed:
Nay, not so much as out of bed
When all the birds have matins said,
And sung their thankful hymns; 't is sin,
Nay, profanation to keep in;
When as a thousand virgins on this day
Spring sooner than the lark to fetch in May!

Rise and put on your foliage, and be seen
To come forth like the spring time, fresh and green,
And sweet as Flora. Take no care
For jewels for your crown, or hair;
Fear not, the leaves will strew
Gems in abundance upon you:
Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,
Against you come, some orient pearls unwept.
Come and receive them, while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night,
And Titan, on the eastern hill
Retires himself, or else stands still
Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying:
Few beads are best when once we go a-Maying!

Come, my Corinna, come, and coming mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park,
Made green and trimmed with trees; see how
Devotion gives each house a bough,
A branch; each porch and door, ere this,
An ark, a tabernacle is,
Made up of whitethorn, neatly interwove,
As if here were those cooler shades of love.

Can such delights be in the street,
And open fields, and we not see 't?
Come, we 'll abroad, and let 's obey
The proclamation made for May;
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying;
But my Corinna, come, let 's go a-Maying!

There 's not a budding boy or girl, this day,
But is got up and gone to bring in May:
A deal of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with whitethorn laden home;
Some have despatched their cakes and cream,
Before that we have left to dream;
And some have wept, and wooed, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth.
Many a green gown has been given;
Many a kiss both odd and even;
Many a glance too has been sent
From out the eye, love's firmament;
Many a jest told, of the key's betraying
This night, and locks picked; yet we 're not a-Maying!

Come, let us go while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time;
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty:
Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun:
And as a vapour or a drop of rain,
Once lost can ne'er be formed again:
So when, or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade;
All love, all liking, all delight,
Lie down with us in endless night.
Then, while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, come, let 's go a-Maying!

Such were the festivities of youth and nature to which our monarchs, especially Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and James, used to go forth and participate. In the reign of the Maiden Queen, pageant seemed

to arrive at its greatest height, and the May-day festivities were celebrated in their fullest manner, and so they continued, attracting the attention of the royal and noble, as well as the vulgar, till the close of the reign of James I. In "The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth," vol. iv. part i., is this entry: "May 8th, 1602. On May-day, the queen went a-Maying to Sir Rich. Buckley's, at Lewisham, some three or four miles off Greenwich." This may be supposed to be one of those scenes represented in Mr. Leslie's magnificent picture of May-day, in which Elizabeth is a conspicuous object. It is recorded by Chambers that Henry VIII. made a grand procession with his queen Katherine, and many lords and ladies, from Greenwich to Shooter's Hill, where they were met by a Robin Hood pageant. In Henry VI.'s time, the aldermen and sheriffs of London went to the Bishop of London's wood, in the parish of Stebenheath, and there had a worshipful dinner for themselves and other comers; and Lydgate the poet, a monk of Bury, sent them by a pursuivant "a joyful commendation of that season, containing sixteen stanzas in metre royall."

In April, 1644, there was an ordinance of the two houses of Parliament for taking down all and singular May-poles; and in 1654, the Moderate Intelligencer says—"this day was more observed by people's *going a-Maying*, than for divers years past, and indeed, much *sin* committed by wicked meetings, with fighting, drunkenness, ribaldry, and the like. Great resort came to Hyde Park; many hundred of rich coaches, and gallants in rich attire, but *most shameful powdered-hair men, and painted and spotted women.*"

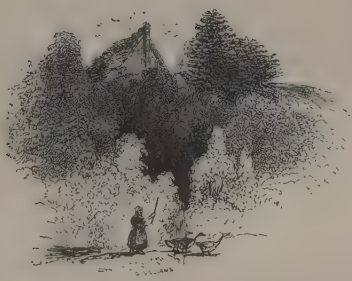
And this before my Lord Protector! so that the old spirit was rising up again from beneath the influence of Puritanism; and the Restoration was again the signal for hoisting the May-poles. In Hone's Every-day Book, and in that valuable miscellany, Time's Telescope, many particulars of the rearing again the great May-pole in the Strand, and of the latest May-pole standing in London, may be found.

Old Aubrey says, that in Holland they had their *May-booms* before their doors, but that he did not recollect seeing a May-pole in France. Yet nothing is more certain than the custom of the French of planting tall trees in their villages at this time, and of adorning their houses with boughs, and of planting a shrub of some pleasant kind under the window, or by the door of their sweethearts, before day-break, on a May-morning. Aubrey complains himself bitterly of the people taking up great trees in the forest of Woodstock to plant before their doors; and John Evelyn as bitterly laments the havoc made in the woods in his time. They are safe from such depredations now. Yet in different parts of England still, till within these few years, lingered vestiges of this once great day. At *Horncastle* in Lincolnshire, the young people used to come marching up to the May-pole with wands wreathed with cowslips, which they there struck together in a wild enthusiasm, and scattered in a shower around them. At *Padstow* in Cornwall, they have, or had lately, the procession of the Hobby-horse. At Oxford on May-day, at four o'clock in the morning, they ascend to the top of the tower of Magdalen College, and used to sing a requiem for the soul of Henry VII., the founder, which was afterwards changed to a

concert of vocal and instrumental music, consisting of several merry catches, and a concluding peal of the bells. The clerks and choristers, with the rest of the performers, afterwards breakfasted on a side of lamb. At Arthur's Seat, at Edinburgh, they make a grand assembly of young people about sunrise, to gather May-dew, and dance. In Huntingdonshire, a correspondent of Time's Telescope says, that the children still exhibit garlands. They suspend a sort of crown of hoops, wreathed and ornamented with flowers, ribbons, handkerchiefs, necklaces, silver spoons, and whatever finery can be procured, at a considerable height above the road, by a rope, extending from chimney to chimney of the cottages, while they attempt to throw their balls over it from side to side, singing, and begging halfpence from the passengers. A May-lady, or doll, or larger figure, sometimes makes an appendage in some side nook. The money collected is afterwards spent in a tea-drinking, with cakes, etc. May-garlands with dolls are carried at Northampton by the neighbouring villagers, and at other places. At Great Gransden in Cambridgeshire, at Hitchin, and elsewhere, they make a Lord and Lady of May. At night, the farmers' young men-servants go and cut hawthorn, singing what they call the *Night-song*. They leave a bough at each house according to the number of young persons in it. On the evening of May-day and the following evening, they go round to every house where they left a bush, singing *The May-Song*. One has a handkerchief on a long wand for a flag, with which he keeps off the crowd. The rest have ribbons in their hats. The May-Song consists of sixteen verses, of a very religious cast. At

Penzance, and in Wales they keep up May dances, and other peculiar ceremonies.

I have been more particular in detailing the rites and customs of this festivity, because, once more popular than any, they are now become more disused. There have been more attempts to revive the celebration of May-day, from its supposed congeniality to the spirit of youth, than that of any other festivity, but all in vain. The times, and the spirit of the times, are changed.



CHAPTER IV.

EASTER FESTIVITIES.

MAY-DAY was the great festival of the young. Easter was the great festival of the church. It followed the dismal and abstemious time of Lent, and came heralded by Palm-Sunday, the commemoration of our Saviour's riding into Jerusalem; Maunday-Thursday, the day on which he washed the feet of his disciples; and Good-Friday, the day of his death. All these days were kept with great circumstance. On Palm-Sunday there was, and still is in Catholic countries, a great procession to church, with tapers and palm branches, or sprigs of box as a substitute. Stowe says that in the week before Easter "had ye great shows made for the fetching in of a *twisted tree*, or *withe*, as they termed it, out of the woods into the king's house, and the like into every man's house of honour and worship."

This was the sallow, or large-leaved willow, whose catkins are now in full bloom, and are still called palms by the country people. Maunday-Thursday, or *Dies Mandati*, the day of the command to wash each other's feet, was a great day of humiliation and profession of Christian benevolence. The Pope washed the feet of

certain poor men; kings and princes did the same; in the monasteries the custom was general, and long retained. After the ceremony, liberal donations were made to the poor, of clothing, and of silver money; and refreshments were given them to mitigate the severity of the fast: on the 15th of April 1731, Maunday-Thursday, a distribution was made at Whitehall, to 48 poor men and 48 poor women, the king's age then being 48—of boiled beef and shoulders of mutton; loaves and fishes; shoes, stockings, linen and woollen cloth; and leathern bags with one, two, three, and four penny pieces of silver, and shillings to each; about four pounds in value. The archbishop of York also washed the feet of a certain number of poor persons. James II. was the last king who performed this in person: but a relic of this custom is still preserved in the donations dispensed at St. James's on this day. In 1814 this donation was made with great ceremony at Whitehall Chapel. In the morning, Dr. Carey, the sub-almoner, and Mr. Hanley, the secretary of the Lord High Almoner, Mr. Nost, and others belonging to the Lord Chamberlain's office, attended by 40 yeomen of the guard, distributed to 75 poor women and 75 poor men—being as many as the king was years old—a quantity of salt fish, consisting of salmon, cod, and herrings; pieces of very fine beef, five loaves of bread, and some ale to drink the king's health. At three o'clock they met again; the men on one side of the chapel, the women on the other. A procession entered, consisting of a party of yeomen of the guard, one of them carrying a large gold dish on his head, containing 150 bags with 75 silver pennies in each, for the poor people, which was placed in the royal

closet. They were followed by the sub-almoner in his robes, with a sash of fine linen over his shoulder, and crossing his waist. He was followed by two boys, two girls, the secretary, and another gentleman, with similar sashes, etc. etc.: all carrying large nosegays. The church evening service was then performed; at the conclusion of which the silver pennies were distributed, and woollen cloth, linen, shoes and stockings, to the poor men and women, and, according to ancient custom, a cup of wine, to drink the king's health. This ceremony is still continued in similar style.

At Rome, the altar of the Capella Paolina is illuminated with more than 4000 wax tapers; and the pope and cardinals go thither in procession, bringing the sacrament along with them, and leaving it there. Then the pope blesses the people, and washes the feet of some pilgrims, and serves them at dinner. At Moscow, Dr. Clarke says, the Archbishop washes the feet of the Apostles, that is, twelve monks designed to represent them. The archbishop takes off his robes, girds his loins with a towel, and proceeds to wash their feet, till he comes to St. Peter, who rises up, and the same interlocution takes place between him and the prelate as is said to have done between our Saviour and that apostle.

The next day is GOOD-FRIDAY, so called by the English, but HOLY-FRIDAY on the continent—the day of our Saviour's death. Thousands of English travellers have witnessed, and many described, the splendid pageant of this night at St. Peter's at Rome, on which the hundred lamps which burn over the apostle's tomb, are extinguished, and a stupendous cross of light appears suspended from the dome, be-

tween the altar and the nave, shedding over the whole edifice a soft lustre delightful to the eye, and highly favourable to picturesque representations. This exhibition is supposed to have originated in the sublime imagination of Michael Angelo, and he who beholds it will acknowledge that it is not unworthy of the inventor. The magnitude of the cross, hanging as if self-suspended, and like a meteor streaming in the air; the blaze that it pours forth; the mixture of light and shade cast on the pillars, arches, statues, and altars; the crowd of spectators placed in all the different attitudes of curiosity, wonder, and devotion; the processions, with their banners and crosses gliding successively in silence along the nave, and kneeling around the altar: the penitents of all nations and dresses collected in groups near the confessionals of their respective languages; a cardinal occasionally advancing through the crowd, and as he kneels, humbly bending his head to the pavement; in fine, the pontiff himself without pomp and pageantry, prostrate before the altar, offering up his adorations in silence, form a scene singularly striking.

In various Catholic countries the lights are suddenly put out at the sound of a bell, and a flagellation, in imitation of Christ's sufferings, commences in the dark, with such cries as make it a truly terrific scene. The effect of the singing of the Miserere at Rome, in the time of the darkness, has been described by several writers as inexpressibly sublime.

At Jerusalem the monks go in procession to Mount Calvary with a large crucifix and image, where they take down the image from it with all the minute procedure of taking down, unnailing, taking off the crown

of thorns, etc., etc. In Portugal, they act in the chapel the whole scene of the crucifixion, the Virgin Mary sitting at the foot of the cross with Mary Magdalene and St. John; the coming of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; the taking down by order of Pilot, and bringing the body in procession to the tomb.

Such are the ceremonies of Catholic countries; here the people eat hot-cross buns and go to church, and that is all. The first sound you hear on awaking in the morning, is that of numerous voices crying hot-cross buns, for every little boy has got a basket,—and sets out with a venture of buns on this day. Yet how few know or call to mind the amazing antiquity of this custom. Mr. Bryant traces it to the time of early Paganism, when little cakes called *bown* were offered to Astarte, the Catholics having politically engrafted all the Gentile customs in their form of Christianity.

Then comes Easter eve, on which the fast was most rigorous; and then broke Easter day, the joyous Sunday, the day of the resurrection. All sorrow, fasting, and care now gave way to gaiety; and religious pageants were established, and are so still in Catholic countries, to edify the people. Goëthe gives a lively description of the effect of the coming Easter morn upon Faust. He is just wearied out of life with ambitious cravings, and about to swallow poison, when he hears the sound of bells, and voices in chorus, singing—Christ ist erstanden!

EASTER HYMN.—Chorus of Angels.

Christ is from the grave arisen!
Joy is his. For him the weary
Earth has ceased its thraldom dreary,
And the cares that prey on mortals;
He hath burst the grave's stern portals;
The grave is no prison:
The Lord hath arisen!

Faustus—Oh, those deep sounds, those voices rich and heavenly!
How powerfully they sway the soul, and force
The cup uplifted from the eager lips!
Proud bells, and do your peals already ring,
To greet the joyous dawn of Easter morn?

Hymn Continued.—Chorus of Women.

We laid him for burial
'Mong aloes and myrrh,
His children and friends
Laid their dead master there!
All wrapped in his grave-dress
We left him in fear—
Ah! where shall we seek him?
The Lord is not here!

Chorus of Angels.

The Lord hath arisen—
Sorrow no longer;
Temptation hath tried him,
But he was the stronger!
Happy, happy victory!
Love, submission, self-denial
Marked the strengthening agony,
Marked the purifying trial:
The grave is no prison:
The Lord is arisen.

Faustus—Those bells announced the merry sports of youth;
This music welcomed in the happy spring;
And now am I once more a happy child,
And old remembrance twining round my heart,
Forbids this act, and checks my daring steps—
Then sing ye forth—sweet songs that breathe of heaven!
Fears come, and earth hath won her child again.

Dr. Anster's Translation.

In this beautiful incident, purely English readers may be apt to attribute to German extravagance the chorus of angels; but Goëthe had in his eye the Catholic pageants—pageants that once were common here. The only theatres of the people were the churches, and the monks were the actors. Plays were got up with a full *dramatis personæ* of monks, in dresses according to the characters they assumed. The sepulchre was erected in the church near the altar, to represent the tomb wherein the body of Christ was laid. At this tomb, which was built at an enormous cost, and lighted at an equal one, and for which there was a gathering from the people, there was a grand performance at Easter-day. In some churches Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and Mary of Nain, were represented by three deacons clothed in dalmatics and amisses, with their heads in the manner of women, and holding a vase in their hands. These performers came through the middle of the choir, and hastening towards the sepulchre with downcast looks, said together this verse, "Who shall remove the stone for us?" Upon this, a boy clothed as an angel, in albs, and holding a wheat-ear in his hand, before the sepulchre, said, "Whom do you seek in the sepulchre?" The Maries answered, "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." The boy-angel answered, "He is not here, but is risen," and pointed to the place with his finger. The boy-angel departed very quickly, and two priests in tunics, sitting without the sepulchre, said, "Women, whom do you seek?" The middle one of the three said, "Sir, if you have taken him away, say so." The priest, shewing the cross, said, "They have taken away the Lord." The two sitting

priests said, "Whom do you seek, women?" The Maries, kissing the place, afterwards went from the sepulchre. In the mean time a priest, in the character of Christ, in an alb, with a stole, holding a cross, met them on the left horn of the altar, and said, "Mary!" Upon hearing this, the mock Mary threw herself at his feet, and with a loud voice, cried, "*Cabboin!*" The priest representing Christ, replied, nodding, "*Noli me tangere;*" touch me not. This being finished, he again appeared at the right horn of the altar, and said to them as they passed before it, "Haik," do not fear. This being finished, he concealed himself, and the women-priests, as though joyful at hearing this, bowed to the altar, and turning towards the choir, sung "Alleluia, the Lord is risen!" This was the signal for the bishop or priest to begin and sing aloud, *Te Deum.*

Brand quotes, from the churchwardens' accounts at Reading, several items paid, for nails for the sepulchre; for rosin for the Resurrection-play; for making a Judas; for writing the plays themselves; and other such purposes. Fosbrooke gives "the properties" of the Sepulchre-show of St. Mary Redcliff church, at Bristol, from an original MS. in his possession, formerly belonging to Chatterton, viz. "Memorandum:—That Master Cannings hath delivered, the 4th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1470, to Master Nicolas Pelles, vicar of Redcliff, Moses Conterin, Phillip Barthelmew, and John Brown, procurators of Redcliff aforesaid, a new sepulchre, well gilt with fine gold, and a civer thereto; a image of God Almighty rising out of the same sepulchre, with all the ordinance that longeth thereto; that is to say,

a lath made of timber, and iron-work thereto. Item; hereto longeth Heven made of timber and stained cloths. Item; Hell made of timber, and iron-work thereto, with Devils the number of thirteen. Item, four knights keeping the sepulchre with their weapons in their hands; that is to say, two spears, two axes, with two shields. Item, four pair of angels' wings, for four angels, made of timber and well painted. Item, the Fadre, the crown and visage; the ball with a cross upon it, well gilt with fine gold. Item, the Holy Ghost, coming out of Heven into the sepulchre. Item, longeth to the four angels four *Perukes.*"

Fosbroke's British Monachism.

Throughout the Christian world, wherever the Catholic and Greek churches extend, great and magnificent are the pageants, processions, and rejoicings still of this day. The lights themselves at the sepulchre are objects of great admiration. When this kingdom was catholic, the *paschal,* or great Easter taper at Westminster Abbey, was three hundred pounds weight. Sometimes a large wax light called a serpent was used; its name being derived from its form, which was spiral, and was wound round a rod. To light it, fire was struck from a flint consecrated by the abbot. The *paschal* in Durham cathedral was square wax, and reached to within a man's length of the roof, from whence this waxen enormity was lighted by "a fine convenience." From this superior light all others were taken. Every taper in the church was purposely extinguished, in order that this might supply a fresh stock of consecrated light, till at the same season of the next year a similar parent torch was prepared.

Of the lighting of the annual fire at the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, Turner, in his Tour to the Levant, gives a singular account. "We entered the church of the Holy Sepulchre with difficulty, our janizary carrying before us a whip of several leathern thongs, which he used most liberally. The church was filled with pilgrims and spectators, not less in number than 7000. What a scene was before me! The Greek and Armenian galleries overlooking the dome, were filled with female pilgrims of those nations, enthusiastically looking towards the sepulchre, and crossing themselves. Below me, the whole church, and particularly the circular apartment containing the dome, was absolutely crammed with pilgrims, men and women, hallooing, shouting, singing, and violently struggling to be near the sepulchre, while the Turkish soldiers were driving them back with their whips. One man I saw in the contention had his right ear literally torn off. The place immediately near the window whence the fire was given, was occupied by the richest pilgrims, who, for this precedence, pay to the Turks 200 or 300 sequins. An old woman sitting on the step of the door of the Greek church, had kept that seat for a day and a night without moving, and paid two dollars to get it. A ring was kept, as well as the tumult would allow, by the crowd around the sepulchre, round which pilgrims were carried on others' shoulders, singing religious songs in Arabic and Greek; while, at other times, a party of ten or twelve ran rioting round it, knocking down every one that stood in their way. The Greek and Armenian bishops were shut in the sepulchre at two o'clock with a single Turk, who is

well paid to declare that he saw the fire descend miraculously, or, at least, to keep silence. Before they enter, the sepulchre is publicly inspected, and all the lamps extinguished.

At twenty minutes to three, the fire was given from the window, and was received with a tremendous and universal shout through the whole church. On its first appearance, the torch was seized by a boy who rubbed it against his face, hand, and neck, with such vehemence as to extinguish it, for which he was well beaten by those near him. Eight different times was the fire given from the window, and as every pilgrim carried candles in his hand, in bunches of four, six, eight, or twelve, in ten minutes the whole church was in a flame, and in five more nearly every candle was extinguished. But what enthusiasm! The men rubbed them against their heads and faces, their caps, and handkerchiefs; and the women uncovered the bosom, directing the flame along their heads, necks, and faces, and all crossing themselves during the operation, with the utmost devotion and velocity. The candles, when a little of them is burnt, are carried home, and ever afterwards preserved as sacred. Messengers with lanterns, stood ready at the door, to carry the fire to the Greek convent of Bethlehem, of the Cross at Sullah, and of St. Saba, near the Dead Sea.

Equally curious, and far more splendid are the ceremonies at Rome on this day. The moment they suppose our Saviour is risen, the cannons of the castle of St. Angelo are fired, and all the bells in the city begin ringing at once. The people, throwing off their fasting weeds, give themselves up to rejoicing. The

church of St. Peter, and the whole piazza before it, are crowded with all classes of persons in gala dresses. The pope is carried in magnificent state, through the church, shaded by waving peacocks' feathers, attended by his *guardia nobile*, in princely uniform, glittering with gold, their helmets adorned with plumes of feathers; the ambassadors and their wives; the senators and their trains; the Armenian bishops and priests, in very splendid robes; the cardinals, bishops, and all the Roman troops in grand procession. The pope blesses the people from the terrace, who receive the benediction on their knees, and look up with eager eyes for the indulgences that are scattered amongst them by some of the cardinals. In the evening there is a grand illumination of St. Peter. "On entering the Piazza," says a traveller, "we beheld the architecture of the dome, façade, and colonnade, all marked out by soft lamps: a bell tolled, and in a moment, as if struck by a magical wand, the whole fabric burst into a dazzling blaze of the most beautiful light; nor could we conceive how the sudden transition was effected. Fire-works and festivities concluded the evening."

In Spain, Portugal, South America, wherever, indeed, the Catholic religion extends, similar church plays, pageants, and rejoicings prevail. In the Greek church, nay even in Turkey, Easter is a great festival. The Russians celebrate it with extraordinary zeal. At Moscow no meetings of any kind take place without repeating the expressions of peace and joy, CHRISTOS VOSCRESS! Christ is risen! To which the answer always is the same; VOISTINEY VOSCRESS! He is risen indeed! On Easter-Monday begins the presentation of the Paschal eggs. Lovers to their mistresses, rela-

tions to each other, servants to their masters, all bring ornamented eggs. The meanest pauper in the street presenting an egg, and repeating the words CHRISTOS VOSCRESS, may demand a salute even of the empress. All business is laid aside; the upper ranks are engaged in visiting, balls, dinners, suppers, masquerades; while boors fill the air with their songs, or roll about the streets drunk. Servants appear in new and tawdry liveries, and carriages in the most sumptuous parade.

In all this may be seen what Easter was in England when it was a Catholic country—what a change in our observance of times the Reformation has produced! Fifteen days were the festivities usually kept up; in many places servants were permitted to rest from their labours; all courts of justice were shut up, and all public games of a worldly nature were forbidden. Still in London it is a great week of relaxation to the mechanics, who pour out to Greenwich and other places by thousands to enjoy themselves. On Easter Monday 1834, as stated under the head of "Sunday in the Country," it appeared that no less than 100,000 persons went by the steam vessels to different places. In large towns, Easter-Monday is a holiday, and you may see a few swings, shows, and whirligigs for the children; but as you go farther into the country, all trace of this once great festival fades away. In the midland counties you rarely see a Paschal, or as it is more commonly called, a Pace-Egg. These eggs, which are almost as ancient as the Ark, of which they are a symbol, are to be found in almost all civilized countries. They are an emblem of the resurrection. As the whole living world went into the ark and were shut up for a season, like the life in the egg, so by

the egg, the ancients for ages symbolized the tradition of that great event, bringing eggs to the altars of their gods. The Hindoos even conceive their god Brahme, once in a cycle of ages, to enter into the egg, with the whole animated universe, and to float, like the ark, on the waters of eternity, till the time comes to reproduce himself and all things with him. So the Gnostics engrafted this idea on the christian religion; for the entrance of Christ into the tomb, and his resurrection, were at once typified by the ark, and the egg, its symbol. This adopted custom, as all such customs do which have a sentiment in them dear to the human heart, flew far and wide. We have seen that the Russians give paschal-eggs: but what is more singular, the Mohammedans do the same. In France, in the week preceding Easter, baskets full of eggs boiled hard, of a red or violet colour, are seen in the streets, and the children amuse themselves with playing with, and afterwards eating them. In Egypt, the cattle and trees were coloured red at this period, because, they said, the world was once on fire at this time. The egg, placed on the paschal table of the Jews, was a symbol of the destruction of the human race, and of its regeneration. The egg entered into all the mysterious ceremonies called apocalyptic; and the Persians, who present it at the commencement of the new year, know that an egg is the symbol of the world. Throughout the country of Bonneval, on the day preceding Easter Sunday, and during the first days of that week, the clerks of the different parishes, beadles, and certain artizans, go about from house to house to ask for their Easter eggs. In many places the children make a sort of

feast at breakfast in Easter on red or yellow eggs. The Druids had the egg in their ceremonies; and near Dieppe is a Druidical barrow, where a fête used to be held by the country people till the Revolution, where vast crowds of both sexes assembled from the neighbouring villages, and gave themselves up to a day of sports and rejoicing, in which eggs figured most singularly.

The Pace-Eggs seem now to have retired northward in England. In Yorkshire and Lancashire, and so northward, they may be found. They are boiled hard, and beautifully coloured with various colours, some by boiling them with different coloured ribbons bound round them; others by colouring them of one colour, and scraping it away in a variety of figures; others by boiling them within the coating of an onion, which imparts to them the admired dye. Early in the morning of Easter-Monday, in the Lancashire towns and villages where wooden clogs are worn, you may hear a strange clatter on the pavement under your window. It is the children, who are running to and fro, begging their Pace-Eggs.

In Staffordshire, Shropshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, and Durham, they still retain the custom of *heaving* or *lifting* on Easter-Monday and Tuesday. In some of these counties on Monday, the men lift the women by taking hold of their arms and legs, which is repeated nine times; and on Tuesday the women use the like ceremony with the men. In other places, the men on one day go decorated with ribbons into every house into which they can get an entrance, force every woman to be seated in this vehicle, and lift her up three times with loud huzzas; and on the

next the women claim the same privilege. In some places the women sit out in the streets, and practise this odd ceremony on every male passenger that they can catch, giving him a salute round; afterwards laying him under contribution, and the sum thus derived they lay out in a tea-drinking.

Ball-play used to be practised on Easter-Sunday in the church, the clergy and dignitaries joining in it. Corporations with the mace, sword, and cap of maintenance carried before them, used to go out on Monday to play at ball, and dance with the ladies. They used to eat tansy-pudding and bacon as customary to the time. These, and many other, to us, ridiculous customs were all of ancient Pagan origin engrafted on Christianity, and had all a symbolical meaning, most probably unperceived by the multitude who used them. The lifting three times had reference to the resurrection after three days; the ball was a symbol of the world; tansy the bitter herbs of the passion, and bacon to express their abhorrence of Jews, the destroyers of the Saviour.

We now see how all these festivities were kept alive by the art and power of the church, and how soon they fell into mere pageants when the Reformation poured in a truer light.

That the Reformation *did* effect this change is most convincingly proved by the retention of the old Catholic religious plays still in Catholic countries. Mr. Hone, in his "Ancient Mysteries," brings together a variety of modern instances of such things on the continent; and our travellers can furnish us with more. Moore's mention of these plays in his "Fudge

Family in Paris," in 1817, must be familiar to every body:—

> What folly
> To say that the French are not pious, dear Dolly,
> When here one beholds, so correctly and rightly,
> The *Testament* turned into melo-drames nightly;
> And doubtless, so fond they 're of scriptural facts,
> They will soon get the *Pentateuch* up in five acts.
> Here *Daniel*, in pantomime, bids bold defiance
> To *Nebuchadnezzar* and all his stuffed lions.

In a note, he adds, that in this "*Daniel, ou la Fosse aux Lions*," JEHOVAH himself is made to appear! In 1822, M. Michelot, the editor of the *Mirour*, was arraigned at the tribunal for having ridiculed the state religion, because he had published a description of a puppet-play just then witnessed at Dieppe, consisting of the birth of Christ, the passion, and the resurrection! and in which our Saviour, the Virgin, Judas, Herod, etc., were most revoltingly introduced. During Congress at Vienna in 1815, the *Allied Monarchs* used to attend a *sacred comedy*, of David, performed by the comedians of the National Theatre, in which Austrian soldiers fired off their muskets and artillery in the characters of Jews and Philistines! It is needless to say that nothing of the kind could be tolerated in this country.

CHAPTER V.

WHITSUNTIDE.

This is the only ancient religious festival that has become a popular one since the Reformation, through the addition of a modern circumstance. Clubs, or Friendly Societies have substituted for the old church ceremonies, a strong motive to assemble in the early days of this week as their anniversary: and the time of the year being so delightful, this holiday has, in fact, become more than any other, what May-day was to the people. Both men and women have their Friendly Societies, in which every member pays a certain weekly or monthly sum, and on occasions of sickness or misfortune, claims a weekly stipend, or a sum of money to bury their dead. These Societies

were very prudential things, especially before the institution of Savings' Banks, which are still better; and in the vicinity of towns have become most important resources for the working class, and especially servants. In the country, Friendly Societies still do, and will probably long remain, because Savings' Banks are not easily introduced there. In a Savings' Bank, whatever a person deposits he receives with interest. It is safe, and may be demanded any time. On the other hand, a man may contribute for years to a club, and not want a penny for himself on account of sickness, and at his death, with the exception of a fixed sum to bury him, and one for his widow, all his fund goes from his family; or, what is worse, he may pay for many years, and just when he wants help, he finds the box empty, through the great run upon it by the sickness or accidental disabling of his fellows; or the steward has proved dishonest, and has decamped; or he has failed. Many such cases have occurred, especially during the violent changes of the last twenty years. In some particular cases, the capital of a dozen Friendly Societies has, by some strange infatuation or artifice, been lodged in the hands of the same man, who has proved bankrupt, and ruined them all. These are the drawbacks on Friendly Societies; and yet with these, they were better than nothing for the poor, and some of them have, in many cases, been remedied by the members sharing their fund amongst them once every seven years. They were, and are, often, the poor man's sole resource and refuge against the horror of falling on the parish, and have helped him through his time of affliction without burthening his mind with a sense of shame and dependence.

Well then may they come together on one certain day or days throughout the country, to hold a feast of fellowship and mutual congratulation in a common hope. Their wealthier neighbours have encouraged them in this bond of union and mutual help, and have become honorary members of their clubs. It is a friendly and christian act. Accordingly, on Whit-Monday, the sunshiny morning has broke over the villages of England with its most holiday smile. All work has ceased. There has been, at first, a sabbath stillness, a repose, a display of holiday costume. Groups of men have met here and there in the streets in quiet talk; the children have begun to play, and make their shrill voices heard through the hamlets. There have been stalls of sweetmeats and toys set out in the little market-place, on the green, by the shady walk, or under the well-known tree. Suddenly the bells have struck up a joyous peal, and a spirit of delight is diffused all over the rustic place, ay, all over every rustic place in merry England. Forth comes streaming the village procession of hardy men or comely women, all arrayed in their best, gay with ribbons and scarfs, a band of music sounding before them; their broad banner of peace and union flapping over their heads, and their wands shouldered like the spears of an ancient army, or used as walking-staves. Forth they stream from their club-room at the village ale-house.

> 'T is merry Whitsuntide, and merrily
> Holiday goes in hamlet and green field;
> Nature and men seem joined, for once, to try
> The strength of Care, and force the carle to yield:
> Summer abroad holds flowery revelry:
> For revelry, the village bells are pealed;

The season's self seems made for rural pleasure,
And rural joy flows with o'erflowing measure.

Go where you will through England's happy valleys,
Deep grows the grass, flowers bask, and wild bees hum;
And ever and anon, with joyous sallies,
Shouting, and music, and the busy drum
Tell you afar where mirth her rustics rallies,
In dusty sports, or 'mid the song and hum
Of Royal Oak, or bowling-green enclosure,
With bower and bench for smoking and composure.

May's jolly dance is past, and hanging high,
Her garlands swing and wither in the sun;
And now abroad gay posied banners fly,
Followed by peaceful troops, and boys that run
To see their sires go marching solemnly,
Shouldering their wands; and youths with ribbons won
From fond fair hands, that yielded them with pride,
And proudly worn this merry Whitsuntide.

And then succeeds a lovelier sight,—the dames,
Wives, mothers, and arch sigh-awakening lasses,
Filling each gazing wight with wounds and flames,
Yet looking each demurely as she passes,
With flower-tipped wand, and bloom that flower outshames;
And, in the van of these sweet, happy faces
Marches the priest, whose sermon says, "be merry,"
The frank, good squire, and sage apothecary. W. H.

Forth stream these happy bands from their club-room, making the procession of the town before they go to church, and then again after church and before going to dinner, for then begins the serious business of feasting, too important to admit of any fresh holiday parade for the rest of the day. Nothing can be more joyously picturesque than this rural holiday. The time of the year—the latter end of May, or early part of June, is itself jubilant. The new leaves are just out in all their tender freshness: the flowers are engoldening the fields, and making odorous the garden:

there are sunshine and brightness to gladden this festival of the lowly. In my mind are associated with this time, from the earliest childhood, sunshine, flowers, the sound of bells, and village bands of music. I see the clubs, as they are called, coming down the village; a procession of its rustic population all in their best attire. In front of them comes bearing the great banner, emblazoned with some fitting scene and motto, old Harry Lomax the blacksmith, deputed to that office for the brawny strength of his arms, and yet, if the wind be stirring, evidently staggering under its weight, and finding enough to do to hold it aloft. There it floats its length of blue and yellow, and on its top nods the huge posy of peonies, laburnum flowers, and lilachs, which our own garden has duly furnished. Then comes sounding the band of drums, bassoons, hautboys, flutes, and clarionets: then the honorary members—the freeholders of the place—the sage apothecary, and the priest whose sermon says "be merry"—literally, for years, his text being on this day the words of Solomon—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;"—and then the simple sons of the hamlet, walking as stately and as gravely as they can for the nods and smiles of all their neighbours who do not join in the procession, but are all at door and window to see them go by. There they go, passing down the shady lane with all the village children at their heels, to the next hamlet, half a mile off, which furnishes members to the club, and must therefore witness their glory. Now the banner and the gilded tops of their wands are seen glancing between the hedge-row trees; their music comes merrily up the hill; and as it dies away at the next

turn, the drumming of distant villages becomes audible in half a dozen different quarters. Then come, one after another, the clubs of the neighbouring hamlets, as the old ballad of the Earl of Murray very expressively says, "sounding through the town;" giving occasion to a world of criticism and comparison to the village gossips, no doubt always terminating in favour of their own folk.

But the most beautiful sight is that of the women's clubs, which in some places walk on the same day with those of the men, but more commonly on Tuesday. Here the contrast between the band and banner-bearer, and the female array that follows them, gives great effect. In some places they are graced with the presence of some of the ladies of the neighbourhood who are honorary members, and their cultivated countenances, and style of bearing, again contrast with the simple elegance or shewy finery of the rustic train which succeeds, consisting of the sedate matrons and blooming damsels of the village. Their light dresses, their gay ribbons and bonnets, their happy, and often very handsome faces, cannot be seen without feeling with Wordsworth, that

> Their beauty makes you glad.

In all the pageants and processions that were ever seen, there is nothing more beautiful than those light wands with which they walk, each crowned with a nosegay of fresh flowers. These posied wands were worthy of the most chastely graceful times of Greece; and amongst the youthful forms are often such as Stothard would have gloried in seizing upon to figure in his charming procession pieces. Indeed a Whit-

suntide procession in his hands would have formed altogether a picture equal to his Canterbury Pilgrimage, and the Procession of the Flitch of Bacon. It has never had justice done it, and Stothard is gone; but we have artists remaining from whose pencil it may, and I trust will, receive honour due. Why not Leslie add it to his Sir Roger de Coverley going to church, or Sir Roger and the Gipsies? I can see the painting already in my mind's eye. The village church is in one extremity; the banner of the men's club is stooping at the porch as the train is about to enter, and the women's club is advancing up the street in the foreground: the band composed of figures full of strong character; the female figures full of simple elegance and arch beauty,—their posied wands depicted with the force of reality; the village street in perspective; the village ale-house with depending sign; booths and stalls, and all around merry faces and holiday forms.

These love-feasts of the Friendly Societies seem very appropriately celebrated at this festival, which was originally derived from the AGAPAI, or love-feasts of the early Christians. It is, indeed, a great improvement on the Whitsun-Ales, which succeeded the Agapai in the Roman church. It is, as I have before observed, the happiest and almost sole adaptation of a modern institution to an ancient custom by the church of England; a policy, on the contrary, so closely studied and extensively practised by the Catholic church. The Whitsun-Ales were so called from the churchwardens buying, and laying in from presents also, a large quantity of malt, which they brewed into beer, and sold out in the church or else-

where. The profits, as well as those from Sunday games—there being no poor-rates—were given to the poor, for whom this was one mode of provision, according to the Christian rule, that all festivities should be rendered innocent by alms. "In every parish," says Aubrey, "was a church-house, to which belonged spits, crocks, and other utensils for dressing provisions. Here the house-keepers met. The young people were there too; and had dancing, bowling, shooting at butts, etc., the ancients sitting gravely by, and looking on.

King James, to check the progress of non-conformity, and keep people to church, published his "Book of Sports," and *commanded* attendance on Whitsun-ales; church-ales, etc.; but he soon found that forced sport is no sport at all. These Friendly Societies, however, by adopting this day, have revived the Agapai in a more popular shape, and long may they continue, refined indeed, and made more temperate by better information, and a better morality. These being held at public houses, and their monthly nights, on which they pay their contributions, being held there too, has made many persons object to them, and the utilitarian spirit, especially during periods of general distress, has induced many of them to give up their bands, banners, and ribbons, and to throw the money thus saved into the general stock; but if we are to retain any rustic festival at all, we cannot, I think, have a more picturesque one, or at a pleasanter time. Let all means be used to preserve a day of relaxation and good-fellowship from gross intemperance, but let not the external grace and rustic pageantry be shorn away. As I have met these

Whitsuntide processions in the retired villages of Staffordshire, or as I saw them in the summer of 1835 at Warsop in Nottinghamshire, I would wish to see them as many years hence as I may live. In the latter village, Miss Hamilton, a lady of poetical taste, and author of several poetical works, had painted the banner for this rural fête with her own hands, and the flowers with which the wands were crowned were selected and disposed in a spirit of true poetry. Long, I say, may this bright day of rejoicing come to the hamlet; and the musing poet stop in the glades of the near woodlands, and exclaim with Kirk White:

Hark how the merry bells ring jocund round,
And now they die upon the veering breeze;
Anon they thunder loud
Full on the musing ear.

Wafted in varying cadence, by the shore
Of the still twinkling river, they bespeak
A day of jubilee,
An ancient holiday.

And lo! the rural revels are begun,
And gaily echoing to the laughing sky,
On the smooth-shaven green
Resounds the voice of mirth.

Mortals! be gladsome while ye have the power,
And laugh, and seize the glittering lapse of joy;
In time the bell will toll
That warns ye to your graves.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS.

The next and last of these popular festivities that I shall notice at any length, is jolly old Christmas,—the festival of the fireside; the most domestic and heart-felt carnival of the year. It has changed its features with the change of national manners and notions, but still it is a time of gladness, of home re-union and re-joicing; a precious time, and one so thoroughly suited to the grave yet cheerful spirit of Englishmen, that it will not soon lose its hold on our affections. Its old usages are so well known; they have been so repeatedly of late years brought to our notice by Washington Irving, Walter Scott, Leigh Hunt in his most graphic and cordial-spirited Months, Indicator, and London Journal, and by many other lovers of the olden time, that I shall not now particularly describe them. We have already seen how, in all our religious festivals, the most ancient customs and rites have been interwoven with Catholicism. Who does not recognize, in the decoration of our houses and churches with ivy, holly, and other evergreens, the decorations of the altars of Greece and Rome with laurels and bays as the symbols of the renewal of the

year and the immortality of Nature? In our mistletoe branches the practice of Druidical times? Who does not see in the Abbot of Unreason, and his jolly crew, the Saturnalia of ancient times? Those who do not, may find in Brand's Antiquities, the various volumes of Times' Telescope, collected by my worthy friend John Millard, and in Hone's Every-day, Table, and Year Books, matter on these subjects, and on the Christmas pageants, rites, and processions of Rome, that would of itself fill a large volume. In old times it was from Christmas to Candlemas a period of general jollification; for the first twelve days—a general carnival. The churches were decorated with evergreens; midnight mass was celebrated with great pomp; according to Aubrey, they danced in the church after prayers, crying Yole, Yole, Yole, etc. For a fortnight before Christmas, and during its continuance, the mummers, or guisers, in their grotesque array, went from house to house, acting George and the Dragon, having the princess Saba, the doctor, and other characters all playing and saying their parts in verse. Others acted Alexander the Great, and the King of Egypt. Bands of carollers went about singing; and all the great gentry had

> A good old fashion when Christmas was come,
> To call in their old neighbours with bagpipe and drum.

And then in those good old halls, what a feasting, and a sporting, and a clamour was there! The Yule block on the fire, the plum-porridge and mince-pies on the table, with mighty rounds of beef, plum-pudding, turkeys, capons, geese, goose-pies, herons, and sundry other game and good things. Ale of twelve

months old circling round, and the old butler and his serving-men carrying up the boar's head, singing in chorus the accustomed chaunt, as they set it before the lord of the feast:

Caput Apri defero
Reddens laudes domino.
The boar's head in hand bring I,
With garlands gay and rosemary;
I pray you all sing merrily,
Qui estis in convivio, etc.

Then, as Burton in his Anatomie of Melancholie tells us, — "what cards, tables, dice, shovel-board, chesse-play, the philosopher's game, small trunkes, billiards, musicke, singing, dancing, ale-games, catches, purposes, questions, merry tales of arrant knights, kings, queens, lovers, lords, ladies, giants, dwarfs, thieves, fairies, goblins, friars, witches, and the rest. Then what kissing under the mistletoe! roaring of storms without, and blazing hearths and merry catches within!"

With all this rude happiness we cannot now linger; let us be thankful that our ancestors, rich and poor, enjoyed it so thoroughly, enjoyed it together, as became Christians, on the feast of the nativity of their common Saviour. We will just review this state of things as it existed in the time of old Wither, two hundred years ago; and the remembrance of it, as it glanced on the imagination of Scott, and then turn to it as it exists amongst us now.

CHRISTMAS.

So now is come our joyful'st feast;
Let every man be jolly;
Each room with ivy leaves is dressed,
And every post with holly.

Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine;
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.

Now all our neighbours' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning,
Their ovens they with baked meats choke,
And all their spits are turning.

Without the door let sorrow lie;
And if from cold it hap to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry.

Now every lad is wondrous trim,
And no man minds his labour;
Our lasses have provided them
A bagpipe and a tabor:

Young men and maids, and girls and boys,
Give life to one another's joys;
And you anon shall by their noise
Perceive that they are merry.

Rank misers now do sparing shun;
Their hall of music soundeth;
And dogs thence with whole shoulders run,
So all things there aboundeth.

The country folks themselves advance
With crowdy-muttons out of France;
And Jack shall pipe and Jyll shall dance,
And all the town be merry.

Ned Squash hath fetched his bands from pawn,
And all his best apparel;
Brisk Nell hath bought a ruff of lawn
With dropping of the barrel.

And those that hardly all the year
Had bread to eat, or rags to wear,
Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
And all the day be merry.

Now poor men to the justices
With capons make their errants;
And if they hap to fail of these,
They plague them with their warrants:

But now they find them with good cheer,
And what they want, they take in beer,
For Christmas comes but once a year,
And then they shall be merry.

Good farmers in the country nurse
The poor, that else were undone;
Some landlords spend their money worse
On lust and pride in London.

There the roysters they do play;
Drab and dice their lands away,
Which may be ours another day,
And therefore let's be merry.

The client now his suit forbears;
The prisoner's heart is eased;
The debtor drinks away his cares,
And for the time is pleased.

Though others' purses be most fat,
Why should we pine or grieve at that?
Hang sorrow! care will kill a cat,
And therefore let's be merry.

Hark! now the wags abroad do call
Each other forth to rambling;
Anon you 'll see them in the hall
For nuts and apples scrambling.

Hark how the roofs with laughter sound,
Anon they 'll think the house goes round,
For they the cellar's depth have found,
And then they will be merry.

The wenches with their wassail bowls
About the streets are singing;
The boys are come to catch the owls,
The wild mare in it bringing.

Our kitchen-boy hath broke his box,
And to the dealing of the ox
Our honest neighbours come by flocks,
And here they will be merry.

Now kings and queens poor sheepcotes have,
And mute with every body;
The lowest now may play the knave,
And wise men play the noddy.

Some youths will now a mumming go,
And others play at Rowland-bo,
And twenty other games boys mo,
Because they will be merry.

Then wherefore in these merry daies
Should we, I pray, be duller?
No, let us sing some roundelays,
To make our mirth the fuller.

And while we thus inspired sing,
Let all the streets with echoes ring;
Woods, and hills, and every thing,
Bear witness we are merry.

This is, at once, quaint and graphic. It shews us the joys of our ancestors in their homeliness and their strength. It is full of the spirit of the time, and the impressions of surrounding things. Let us now see the same days through the magic mist of a modern poet's imagination—a poet whose soul turned to all the beauty and picturesque splendour, and the jollity of the past with a passion never, in any bosom, living with a stronger delight. How, in reverted vision of his heart and mind is everything purified, sanctified, and refined. What a force of enjoyment breathes through the whole: how vividly are all the characteristics of the time, its fable, and its manners given; yet, with what a grace and delicacy, unknown to the

poet of the times themselves. We have here all the happiness, the hospitality, the generous simplicity of the past, tinged with the beautiful illusions of the present.

ANCIENT CHRISTMAS.

And well our christian sires of old
Loved, when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all its hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas Eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;
That only night in all the year
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merrymen go
To gather in the mistletoe.
Then opened wide the baron's hall,
To vassals, tenants, serf and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed with uncontrolled delight
And general voice the happy night,
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of Salvation down.

The fire with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.

Then was brought in the lusty braun
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's-head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell
How, when, and where the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar,
While round the merry wassail bowl,
Garnished with ribbons, blithe did trowl.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide the savoury goose.
Then came the merry maskers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery.
White shirt supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visor made;
But oh! what maskers richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England then,
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through half the year.

Scott's Marmion.

In these two poems we have sufficient picture of the past; what of these things continue with the present? In Catholic countries, indeed, much of the ancient show and circumstance remain. In Rome, all the splendour of the church is called forth. On Christmas eve, the pipes of the Pifferari, or Calabrian minstrels, are heard in the streets. The decorators are busy in draping the churches, clothing altars, and festooning

façades. Devout ladies and holy nuns are preparing dresses, crowns, necklaces, and cradles, for the Madonna and Child of their respective churches. The toilette of the Virgin is performed, and she blazes in diamonds, or shines in tin, according to the riches of the respective parish treasuries. In the church of the Pantheon, says Lady Morgan, she was crowned with gilt paper, and decked with glass beads, and on the same day in Santa Maria Novella, we beheld the coal-black face set off with rubies and sapphires, which glittered on her dusky visage "like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." The cannons of St. Angelo announce the festival; shops are shut, and saloons deserted. The midnight supper and the midnight bands begin the holy revel, and the splendid pomp in which the august ceremonies are performed at the churches of the Quirinal, St. Louis, and the Ara Cœli, is succeeded by a banquet of which even the poorest child of indigence contrives to partake. The people from the mountains and the Campagna flock in to witness and to enjoy the fête, and present a strange sight of wild figures amid the inhabitants of the city. The churches are lit up with thousands of wax tapers; the *culla*, or cradle of Christ is removed from the shrine at the chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, and carried in procession to the chapel of the Santa Croce, where it is exposed on the high altar on Christmas-day to the admiration of the faithful. Musical masses are performed; the Pope himself performs service in the Sextine Chapel on Christmas-eve, and on Christmas-day, his Holiness performs mass in St. Peter's, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; amid a most brilliant assembly of people of all nations, princes, ambassadors, nobles, and distinguished strangers.

At Naples numbers of shepherds from the mountains of the Abruzzi, and the neighbouring Appenines flock in two or three weeks before Christmas, and go about the streets, playing on their bagpipes as the Calabrians do both here and in Rome. Most of the Neapolitan families engage some of these itinerant musicians to play a quarter of an hour at their houses on each day of the *Novena:* the wild appearance of these mountaineers, and the shrill notes of their pipes attract the attention of travellers. Fireworks are displayed here in the most extraordinary manner; and, as in other parts of Italy, it is the custom to erect in the churches and in private houses, representations of the birth of our Saviour;—the stable, the shepherds, the oxen, the Virgin Mary receiving the homage of kings and their trains, are all exhibited with great ingenuity. A similar custom prevailed in some parts of Spain. Such are the customs of these and other catholic countries. In the north, where Christmas was celebrated as a festival of the gods of the ancient Scandinavians, under the name of Yule, it is now celebrated with great devotion; and in Germany they have some domestic customs of a very interesting nature. Coleridge, in the FRIEND, gives the following account of what he witnessed himself. "The children make little presents to their parents, and to each other; and the parents to the children. For three or four months before Christmas, the girls are all busy; and the boys save their pocket-money to make or purchase these presents. What the present is to be, is cautiously kept secret, and the girls have a world of contrivances to conceal it—such as working when they are out on visits, and the others are not with them;

getting up in the morning before day-light, etc. Then, on the evening before Christmas-day, one of the parlours is lighted up by the children, into which the parents must not go. A great yew bough is fastened on the table at a little distance from the wall; a multitude of little tapers are fixed in the bough, but not so as to burn it till they are nearly consumed; and coloured paper, etc. hangs and flutters from the twigs. Under this bough, the children lay out in great order, the presents they mean for their parents, still concealing in their pockets, what they intend for each other. Then the parents are introduced, and each presents his little gift: they then bring out the remainder, one by one, from their pockets, and present them with kisses and embraces. When I witnessed this scene, there were eight or nine children, and the eldest daughter and mother wept aloud for joy and tenderness; and the tears ran down the face of the father, and he clasped all his children so tight to his breast, it seemed as if he did it to stifle the sob that was rising within him. I was very much affected. The shadow of the bough and its appendages on the walls and arching over on the ceiling, made a pretty picture; and then the rapture of the very little ones, when at last the twigs and their needles began to take fire and snap,—O, it was a delight for them!

"On the next day, in the great parlour, the parents lay on the table the presents for the children. A scene of more sober joy succeeds; as on this day, after an old custom, the mother says privately to each of her daughters, and the father to his sons, that which he has observed most praiseworthy, and that which was most faulty in their conduct. Formerly, and still

in all the smaller towns and villages throughout North Germany, these presents are sent by all the parents to some one fellow, who, in high buskins, a white robe, a mask, and an enormous flax wig, personates Knecht Rupert, *i. e.* the servant Rupert. On Christmas night he goes round to every house, and says that Jesus Christ, his master, sent him thither. The parents and elder children receive him with great pomp and reverence, while the little ones are most terribly frightened. He then inquires for the children, and according to the character which he hears from the parents, he gives them the intended present, as if they came out of heaven from Jesus Christ. Or if they should have been bad children, he gives the parents a rod, and, in the name of his master, recommends them to use it frequently. About seven or eight years old, the children are let into the secret, and it is curious how faithfully they keep it."

The bough mentioned by Coleridge as yew, is by other writers said to be of birch. The Christ-child is said to come flying through the air on golden wings; and causes the birch-bough fixed in the corner of the room to grow, and to produce in the night, all manner of fruit; gilt sweetmeats, apples, nuts, etc., for the good children. Richter makes Quintus Fixlein recall one of these scenes of his youth, very beautifully. "I will," said he to himself, "go through the whole Christmas-eve, from the very dawn, as I had it of old. At his very rising he finds spangles on the table, sacred spangles from the gold-leaf and silver-leaf with which the Christ-child has been emblazoning and coating his apples and nuts, the presents of the night. Then comes his mother, bringing him both Christianity and

clothes; for in drawing on his trowsers, she easily recapitulated the ten commandments; and in tying his garters, the Apostles' creed. So soon as candle-light was over, and day-light come, he clambers to the arm of the settle, and then measures the nocturnal growth of the yellow wiry grove of Christmas-birch. There was no such thing as school all day. About three o'clock the old gardener takes his place on his large chair, with his Cologne tobacco-pipe, and, after this, no mortal shall work a stroke. He tells nothing but lies, of the aeronautic Christ-child, and the gingling Ruprecht with his bells. In the dark our little Quintus takes an apple, and divides it with all the figures of stereometry, and spreads the fragments in two heaps on the table. Then, as the lighted candle enters, he starts up in amazement at the unexpected present, and says to his mother, 'Look what the good Christ-child has given thee and me, and I saw one of his wings glittering!' And for this same glittering he himself lies in wait the whole evening.

"About eight o'clock, both of them with necks almost excoriated with washing, and in clean linen, and in universal anxiety lest the Holy Christ-child find them up, are put to bed. What a magic night! What tumult of dreaming hopes! The populous, motley, glittering cave of fancy opens itself in the length of the night, and in the exhaustion of dreaming effort, still darker and darker, fuller and more grotesque; but the waking gives back to the thirsty heart its hopes. All accidental tones, the cries of animals, of watchmen, are, for the timidly devout fancy, sounds out of heaven; singing voices of angels in the air; church music of the morning worship.

"At last come rapid lights from the neighbourhood, playing through the window on the walls, and the Christmas trumpets, and the crowing from the steeple hurries both the boys from their bed. With their clothes in their hands, without fear for the darkness, without feeling for the morning frost, rushing, intoxicated, shouting, they hurry down stairs into the dark room. Fancy riots in the pastry and fruit perfume of the still eclipsed treasures, and haunts her air-castles by the glimmering of the Hesperides-fruit with which the birch-tree is laden. While their mother strikes a light, the falling sparks sportfully open and shroud the dainties on the table, and the many-coloured grove on the wall; and a single atom of that fire bears on it a hanging garden of Eden."

Such are the rites, fancies, and ceremonies with which other, and especially Catholic countries, have invested this ancient festival. What now remain in our Protestant nation of these customs? Much is gone; many are the changes that have taken place in our manners and opinions; and yet is it certain that we regard this season of festivity with a strong and sacred affection. It is true that there is commonly but one day of thorough holiday to the people; one day on which all shops are shut; on which labour in a great measure ceases, and the poor join with the rich in repose and worship. The poor, indeed, do not partake the benefit of this season, as the poor of old time did; the houses of the great are not, as they were then, open to all tenants and dependents. There is now, indeed, upon the great man's table,

No mark to part the squire and lord;

but there is a mark more immobile than the salt, set in the grain of our minds. The distinctions of society have grown with our commercial wealth and have multiplied grades and relations. A sense of independence too has sprung up in the lower classes, with commerce and the growth of intelligence. The great man might, indeed, condescend to call his tenants and dependents to his hall to a Christmas revel, but if they went at all they would go reluctantly, and feel ill at ease. They would feel it as a condescension, and not as springing out of the heartiness of old customs. They would feel that they were out of their element; for all classes know instinctively the broad differences of habits, manners, and modes of thinking that separate them from each other more effectually than any feudal institutions did their ancestors. The pride of the yeoman would be more in danger of suffering than the pride of the lord; the pride of the cottager than that of the farmer, if invited to his table. When the brick floor and the wooden bench gave way in the farm-house to the carpet and the mahogany chair, the feet of the labourer ceased to tread familiarly round the farmer's table. Harvest meals and harvest-home suppers bring them together in rustic districts; they are the remaining links of the old chain of society; but the Christmas custom is broken, and is therefore no longer observable with full content. This great difference between the past and present exists, and therefore the rejoicing of the poor at this time is short and small: would to heaven that the kindly feeling of the community would make it greater!

But, independent of this, to the rest of the com-

munity Christmas brings much of its ancient pleasure. Each class within itself, enjoys it, perhaps more deeply, if less noisily than of old. It is, as I have before said, the festival of the fireside. Friends and families are brought together by many circumstances. Summer tourists and out-of-door pleasure-seekers have all turned home at the frown of winter. As it was their delight in the early year to plan excursions, to make parties, and then to fly forth in all directions, to enjoy new scenes, new faces, summer skies, and sea-breezes; it is now their delight to assemble again round their familiar firesides, with the old familiar faces, to talk over all that they have seen, and said, and done. Parliament has adjourned, and weary senators and their families have fled from London, and are, once more, at their country seats. Children are come home from school; business seems to pause, or to move less urgently in the dead season of the year, and releases numbers from its tread-mill round to an interval of relaxation. All the branches of families meet with spirits eager for enjoyment; and storms, frosts, and darkness without, send them for that enjoyment to the fire-bright hearth.

Christmas-eve approaches, and with it signs of observance, and feasting, and amusement. Holly, ivy, and mistletoe appear in vast quantities in the markets, and almost every housekeeper, except those of the Society of Friends, furnishes herself with a quantity to decorate her windows, if not always to sport a kissing-bush. Churches, halls, city houses and country cottages, are all seen with their windows stuck over with sprigs of green and scarlet-berried holly. Mistletoe is said never to be introduced into churches except by

ignorance of the sextons, being held in abhorrence by the early Christians on account of its prominence in the Druidical ceremonies. And this is likely enough; but in the house it maintains its station, and well merits it, by the beauty of its divaricated branches of pale-green, and its pearly-white berries. But Christmas-eve brings not only evergreens into request, but abundance of more substantial things. The coaches to town are fairly loaded to the utmost with geese, turkeys and game, as those downwards are with barrels of oysters. The grocers are busy selling currants, raisins, spices, and other good things, for the composition of mince-pies and Christmas sweetmeats. Pigs are killed, and pork-pies, sausages, and spareribs abound from the greatest hall to the lowest hut. Heaven be thanked that the blessing goes so far in this instance. It is a delight to think of all the little children in the poor man's house, that the year through have lived coarsely if not sparely, now watching the fat pig from their own sty cut up, and pies and spareribs, boiling pieces, black-puddings, and sausages, springing up as from a magical storehouse unlocked by the key of Old Christmas. O! it is a delicious time, when the father and the mother can sit down amongst their throng of eager little ones, that "feel their life in every limb," and feast them to their hearts' content; and live with them for a short time amid substantial things and savoury smells, and, after all, hang in the chimney-corner two noble flitches for the coming year.

These good things come with Christmas-eve, and with them come the Waites. Except in some few very primitive districts, these do not go about for a week or more as they used to do, but merely on this

night. And it is a fact singularly unfortunate for Mr. Bulwer's theory of the effect of Methodism noticed before, that wherever Methodists exist they are sure to be amongst these waites, and are, in many places, the only ones. The strange, dreamy, yet delightful effect of the music and singing of these waites, as you hear them in a state rather of sleep than waking, who has not experienced? They are, as Fixlein expresses it, to our conscious senses, but half dormant understandings, "sounds out of heaven, singing voices of angels in the air." I shall never forget the delicious impressions of this midnight music on my childish spirit, and would fain hear such strains on every returning Christmas-eve till I cease to hear any mortal sounds.

But Christmas morning comes; and ere daylight dawns, you are awoke by the rejoicing music of all the village or the city bells, as it may be; and cannot help feeling, spite of all that puritans and grave denouncers of times and seasons have said, that there is something holy in the remembrance of the time which does your spirit good. Who can read these verses of Wordsworth's, addressed to his brother, without feeling the truth of this?

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH.

The minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage eaves;
While, smitten by the lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green.

Through hill and valley every breeze
Had sank to rest with folded wings;
Keen was the air, but could not freeze
Nor check the music of their strings;

So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand.

And who but listened?—till was paid
  Respect to every inmate's claim;
The greeting given, the music played,
  In honour of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And "merry Christmas" wished to all!

O Brother! I revere the choice
  That took thee from thy native hills;
And it is given thee to rejoice;
  Though public care full often tills,
(Heaven only witness of the toil)
A barren and ungrateful soil.

Yet would that thou with me and mine,
  Hadst heard this never-failing rite;
And seen on other faces shine
  A true revival of the light—
Which Nature and these rustic Powers,
In simple childhood, spread on ours!

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
  On these expected, annual rounds,
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
  Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door
That guards the dwelling of the poor.

How touching, when at midnight sweep
  Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,
To hear—and sink again to sleep!
  Or, at an earlier call, to mark,
By blazing fire, the still suspense
Of self-complacent innocence.

The mutual nod,—the grave disguise
  Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er;
And some unbidden tears that rise
  For names once heard, and heard no more:
Tears brightened by the serenade,
For infant in the cradle laid!

Ah! not for emerald fields alone,
With ambient streams more pure and bright
Than fabled Cytherea's zone
Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,
Is to my heart of hearts endeared
The ground where we were born and reared!

Hail! ancient Manners! sure defence,
Where they survive, of wholesome laws;
Remnants of love whose modest sense
Thus into narrow room withdraws;
Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
And ye, that guard them, Mountains old!

Christmas-day then is come! and with it begins a heart-felt season of social delight, and interchanges of kindred enjoyments. In large houses are large parties, music, and feasting, dancing and cards. Beautiful faces and noble forms, the most fair and accomplished of England's sons and daughters, beautify the ample fire-sides of aristocratic halls. Senators and judges, lawyers and clergymen, poets and philosophers, there meet in cheerful and even sportive ease, amid the elegancies of polished life. In more old-fashioned, but substantial country abodes, old fashioned hilarity prevails. In the farm-house hearty spirits are met. Here are dancing and feasting too; and often blindman's buff, turn-trencher, and some of the simple games of the last age remain. In all families, except the families of the poor, who seem too much forgotten at this, as at other times in this refined age, there are visits paid and received; parties going out, or coming in; and everywhere abound, as indispensable to the season, mince-pies, and wishes for "a merry Christmas and a happy New-year."

It is only in the more primitive parts of the country

that the olden customs remain. The Christmas carols which were sung about from door to door, for a week at least, not twenty years ago, are rarely heard now in the midland counties. More northward, from the hills of Derbyshire, and the bordering ones of Staffordshire, up through Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham, you may frequently meet with them. The late Mrs. Fletcher (Miss Jewsbury) one of the most highly-gifted, both in talents and principle, of those who are early lost to the world, collected a volume of such as are sung in the neighbourhood of Manchester, and presented it to Mrs. Howitt. Amongst them are many of the most ancient, such as—"Under the Leaves, or the Seven Virgins," beginning—

All under the leaves, and the leaves of life,
I met with virgins seven;
And one of them was Mary mild,
Our Lord's Mother in Heaven.

"The Moon shone bright"—beginning with

The moon shone bright, and the stars gave a light
A little before it was day,
The Lord our God he called to us,
And bade us awake and pray.

Awake, awake, good people all,
Awake and you shall hear,
Our blessed Lord died on the cross
For us whom he loved so dear;

and ending thus—

To-day though you 're alive and well,
Worth many a thousand pound,
To-morrow dead, and cold as clay,
Your corpse lies under ground.

God bless the master of this house,
Mistress and children dear;
Joyful may their Christmas be,
And happy their New-year.

That singular old ballad of Dives and Lazarus, in which occur these stanzas:—

As it fell out upon a day,
Poor Lazarus sickened and died;
There came two angels out of heaven
His soul therein to guide.

"Rise up, rise up, brother Lazarus,
Thine heavenly guides are we;
Thy place it is provided in heaven,
To sit on an angel's knee."

As it fell out upon a day,
Rich Dives sickened and died;
There came two serpents out of hell
His soul therein to guide.

"Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
Thine evil guides are we;
Thy place it is provided in hell,
To sit on a serpent's knee!"

One has this home-thrusting stanza:

So proud and lofty do some people grow,
Dressing themselves like players in a show;
They patch and paint, and dress like idle stuff,
As if God had not made them good enough.

The well-known TWELVE JOYS:

The first good joy that Mary had, it was the joy of one,
To see her own son Jesus to suck at her breast-bone;
To suck at her breast-bone, good man, and blessed shall he be,
Through Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the One United Three! etc.

The equally popular one:

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay;
Remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas-day,
To save poor souls from Satan's power,
Who 've long time gone astray.

Which ends thus:

God bless the master of this house,
And mistress also;
And all the little children
That round the table go;
With their pockets full of money,
And their cellars full of beer;
And God send you a happy New-year.

Amongst them is found BETHLEHEM CITY.

In Bethlehem city, in Jewry it was,
That Joseph and Mary together did pass;
And there to be tax'd, as many one mo,
When Cæsar commanded, in truth it was so, etc.

And that fine hymn which is sung in some places at midnight by the Waites, and which the Methodists have adopted for their early morning service:

Christians, awake! salute the happy morn,
Whereon the Saviour of the world was born.

And the following, which though evidently in a most defective state, I shall give entire, as exhibiting a striking impress of the character of the middle ages; and shew how well they understood the true spirit of Christ.

Honour the leaves and the leaves of life,
Upon this blest holiday,
When Jesus asked his mother dear,
Whether he might go to play.

To play! to play! said blessed Mary,
To play, then get you gone;
And see there be no complaint of you
At night when you come home.

Sweet Jesus, he ran unto yonder town,
As far as the holy well;
And there he saw three as fine children
As ever eyes beheld.
He said, "God bless you every one,
And sweet may your sleep be;
And now, little children, I'll play with you,
And you shall play with me."
"Nay, nay, we are lords' and ladies' sons—
Thou art meaner than us all;
Thou art but a silly fair maid's child,
Born in an oxen's stall."

Sweet Jesus he turned himself about,
Neither laughed, nor smiled, nor spoke,
But the tears trickled down from his pretty little eyes,
Like waters from the rock.

Sweet Jesus he ran to his mother dear,
As fast as he could run—
Oh mother, I saw three as fine children
As ever were eyes set on.
I said "God bless you every one,
And sweet may your sleep be—
And now, little children, I' ll play with you,
And you shall play with me."
"Nay," said they, "we 're lords' and ladies' sons,
Thou 'rt meaner than us all;
For thou art but a poor fair maid's child,
Born in an oxen's stall."
Then the tears trickled down from his pretty little eyes
As fast as they could fall.

"Then," said she, "go down to yonder town,
As far as the holy well,
And there take up those infants' souls,
And dip them deep in hell."
"Oh no! oh no!" sweet Jesus then said,
"Oh no! that never can be;
For there are many of those infants' souls
Crying out for the help of me!"

I must not close this article either without recalling to the recollection of some of my readers that quaint old carol, which was sung by bands of little children at Christmas, and which brings fairly before us the paintings of the old masters, where Joseph is always represented as so old a man, and Mary sits in the "oxen's stall" with her crown on her head.

> Joseph was an old man, and an old man was he,
> And he married Mary, the Queen of Galilee.

It goes on to describe how they went into the garden, and Queen Mary asked Joseph to gather her some cherries, on which he turned very crabbed, made Mary weep, and then all the cherry-trees made their obeisance;

> And bowed down to Mary's knee—
> And she gathered cherries by one, two, and three.

These are in the spirit of the legend which relates that Jesus, when a boy, was playing with other boys, when they made sparrows of clay, and he made a sparrow too, but his sparrow became instantly alive, and flew away.

Simple were the times when such rude rhymes as these were framed, to be sung before the doors and by the blazing yule-clogs of gentle and simple. They are not calculated to stand the test of these days; the schoolmaster will root them all out: but it is to be hoped that he will leave untouched the cordial spirit of piety and affection so fitted to make happy this desolate period of the year.

In Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Cornwall, and Devon, the old spirit of Christmas seems to be kept up more earnestly than in most other counties. In Cornwall,

they still exhibit the old dance of St. George and the Dragon. A young friend of ours happening to be at Calden-Low in the Staffordshire hills at Christmas, in came the band of bedizened actors, and performed the whole ancient drama, personating St. George, the King of Egypt, the fair Saba, the King's daughter, the Doctor, and other characters, with great energy and in rude verse. In Devon they still bless the orchards on Christmas-eve, according to the old verses:—

> Wassail the trees, that they may beare
> You many a plum, and many a peare:
> For more or less fruits they will bring
> As you do give them wassailing.

In some places, they walk in procession to the principal orchards in the parish. In each orchard one tree is selected as the representative of the rest; and is saluted with a certain form of words. They then either sprinkle the tree with cider, or dash a bowl of cider against it. In other places, only the farmer and his servants assemble on the occasion, and after immersing cakes in cider, hang them on the apple-trees. They then sprinkle the trees with cider; pronounce their incantation; dance about the tree, and then go home to feast.

In Mr. Grant Stewart's "Popular Superstitions of the Highlands," may be found an account of the Highland mode of celebrating Christmas; and here we say a hearty good-bye to Jolly Old Christmas.

We have now made a hasty sketch of those old festivals which still retain more or less of their ancient influence. We have endeavoured to show what is the present state of custom and feeling in these particulars

by contrasting it with the past. New-Year's-Day is yet a day of salutations; Valentine's-Day has yet some sportive observance amongst the young; and Plough-Monday, here and there, in the thoroughly agricultural districts, sends out its motley team. This consists of the farm-servants and labourers. They are dressed in harlequin guise, with wooden swords, plenty of ribbons, faces daubed with white-lead, red ochre, and lamp-black. One is always dressed in woman's clothes and armed with a besom, a sort of burlesque mixture of Witch and Columbine. Another drives the team of men-horses with a long wand, at the end of which is tied a bladder instead of a lash; so that blows are given without pain, but with plenty of noise. The insolence of these Plough-bullocks, as they are called, which might accord with ancient license, but does not at all suit modern habits, has contributed, more than anything else, to put them down. They visited every house of any account, and solicited a contribution in no very humble terms. If it was refused, their practice was to plough up the garden walk, or do some other mischief. One band ploughed up the palisades of a widow lady of our acquaintance, and having to appear before a magistrate for it, and to pay damages, never afterwards visited that neighbourhood. In some places I have known them enter houses, whence they could only be ejected by the main power of the collected neighbours; for they extended their excursions often to the distance of ten miles or more, and where they were the most unknown, there practised the most insolence. Nobody regrets the discontinuance of this usage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAIRY SUPERSTITIONS.

The Fairies, which gave in old times one of the most interesting and poetical features to the country, have all vanished clean away. Of those supernatural and airy beings who used to haunt the wood-lands, hamlets, and solitary houses of Old England, they were the first to depart. "They were of the old profession"—true Catholics; and with catholicism they departed; and have only left their interest in the pages of our poets, who still cling with fondness to the fairy mythology. Bogards, barguests, ghosts, and hobgoblins, still in many an obscure hamlet, and the more primitive parts of the country, maintain much of their ancient power, and continue to quicken the steps of the clown in lonely places, of the school-boy past the churchyard, and to add a fearful interest to the winter fire-side stories in cottages and farms. Witchcraft, spite of what Sir Walter Scott asserted in his Demonology, is far from having ceased to have stanch believers in numerous places. Are not many of the Methodists firmly persuaded of demoniacal possession? It is not long ago that Mr. Heaton, one of their ministers,

published a volume in support of this doctrine, and detailed a very extraordinary case of possession of a boy who mounted on the surbase of the room, and danced there, on a space where he could not for a moment support himself when not under this influence. In this curious book, which I sent to Sir Walter Scott, and which he assured me he meant to make use of, but was, no doubt, prevented by his quickly succeeding decline, is a minute account of all the process of praying the spirit out of the lad, of the dogged resistance of the demon, and their final triumph over him. John Wesley was strongly impressed with a belief of such things, as may be seen in his "News from the Invisible World," and in the pages of the old series of the Wesleyan Magazine. And if recent demoniacal possession be a living faith of the nineteenth century, witchcraft has no lack of votaries. In Nottingham, a town of seventy thousand inhabitants, I knew a shoemaker who stood six feet in height, and "might dance in iron mail," who lately lived, and probably still lives, in constant dread of the evil arts of witches and wizards. On the lintel and sill of his door, he had the ancient charm of reversed horse-shoes nailed; but he said, he found them of little use against the audacious malice of witchcraft. He had standing regularly by his fireside a sack-bag of salt, for he bought it by a sack at a time for the purpose, and of this he frequently, during the day, but more especially on dark and stormy nights, took a handful, with a few horsenail stumps, and crooked pins, and casting them into the fire together, prayed to the Lord to torment all witches and wizards in the neighbourhood, and he believed that they were tormented. As I stood by the man's fire

while he related this, it was burning with the beautiful purple hue of salt. On all other subjects he appeared as grave and sober as his neighbours.

In the obscure alleys of large towns, as well as in solitary situations, fortune-tellers still live, and to my own knowledge draw many customers, besides the gipsies, who haunt there in winter time, and are the regular professors of palmistry. Witches, spectres, gipsies, and cunning people still remain to diversify common life, spite of all the spread of education; but the fairies, pleasant little people, are gone for ever, and have been gone long. Chaucer, indeed, says that they were gone in his day.

In olde days of the king Artour,
Of which that Bretons speken grete honour,
All was this land fulfilled of faerie;
The elf quene, with her joly compagnie
Danced full oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old opinion as I rede;
I speke of many hundred yeres ago;
But now can no man see non elves mo,
For now the grete charitie and prayers
Of limitours and other holy freeres,
That serchen every land and every streme,
As thikke as motes in the sonne beme,
Blessing halles, chambers, kitchenes and boures,
Cities and burghes, castles high and towres,
Thropes and bernes, shepenes and dairies,
This maketh that ther ben no fairies;
For then as wont to walken was an elf,
Ther walketh now the limitour himself.

And Dr. Corbet, bishop of Norwich, who died in 1635, wrote the following interesting

FAREWELL TO THE FAIRIES.

Farewell rewards and fairies!
Good housewives now may say;
For now foule sluts in dairies,
Doe fare as well as they;
And though they sweepe their hearths no less
Than mayds were wont to doe,
Yet who of late for cleanliness
Finds sixpence in her shoe?

Lament, lament old Abbies,
The Fairies' lost command;
They did but change priests' babies,
But some have changed your land:
And all your children stolen from thence
Are now growne Puritanes,
Who live as changlings ever since
For love of your demenses.

At morning and at evening both
You merry were and glad,
So little care of sleepe and sloth,
Those prettie ladies had.
When Tom came home from labour,
Or Ciss to milking rose,
Then merrily went their tabour,
And merrily went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelayes
Of theirs which yet remain;
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy playne.
But since of late Elizabeth,
And later James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time hath bin.

By which we note the fairies
Were of the old profession,
Their songs were *Ave Maries*,
Their dances were procession.

But now, alas! they all are dead,
Or gone beyond the seas,
Or farther for religion fled,
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company
They never could endure;
And whoso kept not secretly,
Their mirth was punished sure.
It was a just and christian deed,
To pinch such black and blue;
O how the commonwealth doth need
Such justices as you!

Now they have left our quarters;
A Register they have,
Who can peruse their charters,
A man both wise and grave.
A hundred of their merry pranks
By one that I could name
Are kept in store; con twenty marks
To William for the same.

To William Churne of Staffordshire
Give laud and praises due,
Who every meal can mend your cheer
With tales both old and true:
To William all give audience,
And pray ye for his noddle;
For all the fairies' evidence
Were lost if it were addle.

Possibly the fairies may yet linger in the dales of Ettrick Forest, where poor Hogg used to see them, and sung so many beautiful lays in their honour, that he may be styled the Poet Laureate of the Fairies. But he is gone now—gone after many another great and shining light of the age, having made the shepherd's plaid almost as glorious as the prophet's mantle—and they may not choose to reveal themselves to another. They may possibly yet pay an occasional

visit to Staffordshire, the county of William Churne; and we have, indeed, heard of them doing some pleasant miracles on Midsummer-eve on Calden-Low. If we are to believe the report of a certain little damsel, as given in Tait's Magazine of June, 1835—

Some, they played with the water,
And rolled it down the hill;
And this, they said, shall merrily turn
The poor old miller's mill.

For there has been no water
Ever since the first of May,
And a blithe man shall the miller be
By the dawning of the day,

O! the miller how he will laugh
As he sees the mill-dam rise—
The jolly old miller how he will laugh
Till the tears fill both his eyes.

And some they seized the little winds,
That sounded over the hill,
And each put a horn into his mouth,
And blew so sharp and shrill.

"And there," said one, "the merry winds go
Away from every horn,
And these shall clear the mildew dank
From the blind old widow's corn."

O! the poor blind widow—
Though she has mourned so long,
She'll be merry enough when the mildew's gone,
And the corn stands stiff and strong.

And some they brought the brown lintseed,
And flung it down from the Low;
"And this," said they, "by the sunrise,
In the weaver's croft shall grow."

O! the poor, lame weaver,
How will he laugh outright,
When he sees his dwindling flax-field
All full of flowers by night.

Then up and spoke a brownie,
With a long beard on his chin,
"And I have spun the tow," said he,
"And I want some more to spin.

"I've spun a piece of hempen cloth,
And I want to spin another;
A little sheet for Mary's bed.
And an apron for her mother."

And with that I could not help but laugh,
And I laughed out loud and free,
And then, on the top of the Calden-Low
There was no one left but me.

And all on the top of the Calden-Low
The mists were cold and grey,
And nothing I saw but the mossy stones,
That round about me lay.

This deponent saith, that coming down from the Low, she saw all their benevolent intentions already realized. It is to be hoped that such visits may be again paid to Calden-Low, but we have our doubts.

The Pixies may possibly still haunt those caves and dells in Devonshire where Coleridge and Carrington saw them; but with those exceptions—and they received on the faith of poets, who take license—we believe they have all emigrated. In the lays of Shakspeare and Milton, they are made immortal denizens of our soil; and we shall never see moonlight, or come upon the VER-RINGS that still mark our plains and downs, without feeling and poetically believing that the fairies have been there. In Wales, however, the common people still declare that they abide. Scotland may have given up the brownies, and kelpies, and urisks; and we may no longer have hobthrushes dwelling amongst our rocks, or Robin Goodfellow, alias Puck, alias Hobgoblin, playing his pranks, as in this confession.

When e'er night-wanderers I meet,
As from their night-sports they trudge home,
With counterfeiting voice I greete,
And call them on with me to roame,
Through woods, through lakes,
Through bogs, through brakes;
Or else unseen with them I go,
All in the nicke,
To play some tricke,
And frolicke it with ho, ho, ho!

Sometimes I meet them like a man;
Sometimes an ox, sometimes a hound;
And to a horse I turn me can;
To trip and trot about them round.
But if to ride
My backe they stride,
More swift than wind away I go,
O'er hedge and londs,
Through pools and ponds
I whinny laughing ho, ho, ho!

He may not come to play those pranks, nor as Milton has described his visits to the farm:

To earn the cream-bowl duly set.

The thrashing-machine has thrown the lubber-fiend out of employment; but the Welsh still declare themselves honoured by the continuance of these night-wanderers. They have still the corpse-candles; and hear Gabriel's hounds hunting over the hills by night, and stoutly avow that the fairies are as numerous there as ever. There is a water-fall at Aberpergum, called the Fairies' Water-fall, where they are, almost any night to be heard singing; and I have heard a very grave Friend declare that he has seen them dancing in a green meadow, as he rode home at night. How long, indeed, this may continue, one cannot tell; for old Morgan Lewis, who for fifty years has acted as

guide to the beautiful water-falls of Neath Valley, and is a most firm believer in all the Fairy faith, especially of their luring children away by assuming the forms of their deceased relatives, and offering them *fairy-bread* to eat, which changes their natures, and they are compelled to join the Elfin troop—declares that they are now gone from that neighbourhood; that "the spirit of man is become too strong for them." A fair friend has sketched for me, the old man in the attitude of describing to a party the exact spot on which his father saw their *very last* appearance. Behind him rises the Dînas Rock, from time immemorial the sanctum sanctorum of Welsh fairyland; and old Morgan is exclaiming, "They are gone! they are gone! and we'll never see them more!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VILLAGE INN.

THERE is nothing more characteristic in rural life than a village ale-house, or inn. It is the centre of information, and the regular, or occasional rendezvous of almost every-body in the neighbourhood. You there see all sorts of characters, or you hear of them. The where-about of every-body all around is there perfectly understood. I do not mean the low pot-house—the new beer-shop of the new Beer-bill, with LICENSED TO BE DRUNK ON THE PREMISES blazoned over the door in staring characters—the Tom-and-Jerry of the midland counties—the Kidley-Wink of the west of England. No, I mean the good old-fashioned country ale-house; the substantial, well-to-do old country ale-house—situated on a village green, or by the road-side, with a comfortable sweep out of the road itself, for carriages or carts to come round to the door, and stand out of all harm's-way. The nice old-fashioned house, in a quiet, rural, out-of-the-way,

old-fashioned district. The very house which Goldsmith in his day described—

> Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
> Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
> And news much older than their ale went round.

It is a low, white-washed, or slap-dashed, or stuccoed, or timber-framed house, with its various roof, and steep gables; its casement windows above, bright and clean, peeping out from amongst vines or jasmines, where the inn-keeper's neat daughter, who acts the parts of chamber-maid, bar-maid, and waiter, may be seen looking abroad; and its broad bay-windows below, where parties may do the same, and where, as you pass, you may occasionally see such parties—a pleasant-looking family, or a group of young, gay people, with merry, and often very sweet faces amongst them;—their post-chaise, travelling-carriage, barouche, or spring-cart, according to their several styles and dignities, standing at the door, under the great spreading tree. Ay, there is the old spreading tree, that is as old and probably older than the inn itself. It is an elm, with a knotty mass of root swelled out around the base of its sturdy stem into a prodigious heap—into a seat, in fact, on holiday occasions, for a score of rustic revellers, or resters. In some cases, where the root has not been so accommodating, a good stout bench runs round it; or where the root is at all endangered by scratching dogs, picking and hewing children, or rooting pigs of the village, it has heaped up a good mound of earth round it; or it is protected by a circle of wattled fence.

You see the tree is a tree of mark and consequence;

it is, indeed, *the tree.* It is looked upon as part and parcel of the concern; of as much consequence to the house as its sign; and it is often the sign itself:—The Old-Elm-Tree! Or it may be a yew—the very yew out of which Robin Hood and Little John, Will Scarlett or Will Stutely cut their bows—yes, that house is "The Robin Hood." Or it may be a mighty ash—the One-Ash, or the Mony-Ash as in the Peak of Derbyshire. Or it is an oak of as much dignity—The Royal-Oak. Or it is a whole grove or cluster by character or tradition—The Seven-Sisters—or The Four-Brothers—or The Nine-Oaks—all of which sisters, brothers, or nine companions, except one, are decayed, dropped off, or thrown down, as many a family beside has been. See!—the sign hangs in it, or is suspended on its post just by, bearing the likeness of the original tree, *attempted* by some village artist.

Just such a tree and such a house, all my Surrey, and many of my Metropolitan readers are familiar with at the foot of St. Anne's Hill, by Chertsey. The Golden-Grove, kept by James Snowden,—who does not know it, that loves sweet scenery, sweet associations, or a pleasant steak and pipe, or a tea-party on a holiday of nature, in one of the most delicious nests imaginable? Yes! there is a nice old village inn for you; and such a tree! There you have the picture of the Golden-Grove all in a blaze of gold—somewhat dashed and dimmed, it is true, by the blaze of many suns,—but there it is, in front of the inn, and by the old tree. The inn, the hanging gardens and orchards, the rustic cottages scattered about, the rich woods and splendid prospects above, the beautiful meadows and

winding streams below; why, they are enough to arrest any traveller, and make him put up his horse, and determine to breathe a little of this sweet air, and indulge in this Arcadian calm, amid these embowering woodlands. And where is he? Below in those fair meadows, amid those cottage roofs and orchard trees, rises the low, square church-tower of Chertsey:—Chertsey, where Cowley lived and died; and where his garden still remains, as delicious as ever, with its grassy walk winding by his favourite brook, and the little wooden bridge leading into the richest meadows. And where his old house yet remains, saving the porch pointing to the street, which was taken down for the public safety, but the circumstance and its cause recorded on a tablet on the wall, with this concluding line—

Here the last accents flowed from Cowley's tongue.

You then, poetical or enthusiastic traveller or visitant, tread the ground which Abraham Cowley trod in his retirement; and what is more, you tread the ground which Charles James Fox trod in his retirement. The hill above is St. Anne's,—conspicuous through a great part of Surrey, Berks, Bucks, Herts, and Middlesex, delightful for its woods and for its splendid panoramic views, including the winding Thames, Cooper's Hill, celebrated by Sir John Denham, Hampstead, Highgate, Harrow, and mighty London itself, but still more delightful to the patriotic visitant, as the place where Fox retired to refresh himself after his parliamentary contests, and to recruit himself for fresh struggles for his country. It is a place which Rogers by his pen, and Turner by his pencil,

have made still more sacred. Who does not know the lines of Rogers in his poem of Human Life, in his last splendidly embellished edition of his works, referring to Fox?

> And now once more where most he wished to be,
> In his own fields, breathing tranquillity—
> We hail him—not less happy Fox, than thee!
> Thee at St. Anne's so soon of care beguiled,
> Playful, sincere, and artless as a child!
> Thee, who wouldst watch a bird's nest on the spray,
> Through the green leaves exploring, day by day.
> How oft from grove to grove, from seat to seat,
> With thee conversing in thy loved retreat,
> I saw the sun go down!—Ah, then 't was thine,
> Ne'er to forget some volume half divine,
> Shakspeare's or Dryden's—through the chequered shade
> Borne in thy hand behind thee as we strayed;
> And where we sate (and many a halt we made),
> To read there with a fervour all thine own,
> And in thy grand and melancholy tone,
> Some splendid passage, not to thee unknown,
> Fit theme for long discourse.—Thy bell has tolled!
> —But in thy place among us we behold
> One who resembles thee.

There is the place, drawn by Turner, exactly as it is; and there is still living the widow of the great statesman, at the advanced age of upwards of ninety years.

It must be confessed that the Golden-Grove is located in a very golden situation, and then—its tree! I suppose that is scarcely to be rivalled. I have placed on my title-page the King of Belgium's tree, but James Snowden's tree is every whit as remarkable.

It is a grand old elm, with massy, wide-spreading horizontal branches, on which is laid a stout oaken floor, fenced in by a strong parapet of boards and

palisades. It is an aerial, arborean lodge, reached by an easy flight of steps, furnished with seats and tables, and canopied by the green awning of the whole tree's foliage—just the sylvan bower that makes one long to see a joyous party in on a summer's day, looking out with glad faces on the passers by; or a rustic company, with their homely pots of ale, and the smoke of their pipes circling out amongst the green leaves about them.

This is the old-fashioned country ale-house, such as I am speaking of, only that we are still merely at the entrance of it, still lingering and haunting about the door, while the landlady and her daughter are on the fidgets to receive us, and the old landlord comes out with his bare head, and his rustic bow, and greets us with—"A fine old tree that, sir! Their heads don't ache as planted it, sir;" and the hostler is advancing from the stable to take charge of our vehicle. But walk in. How clean it is! Bless us, what a nice snug parlour! What an ample, comfortable kitchen, or house-place as they call it, with its wide fire-place. What an array of plates, dishes, and bright pewter pots on the shelves around, and of hams and flitches dangling from the ceiling. It is a substantial place; there is no fear of starvation here. The joint is turning at the fire, and the tea-kitchen stands for ever boiling, ready to mix a tumbler of spirits, or to make coffee or tea at all hours.

These country inns are, of course, some greater, some less; some richer, some more simple—according to their custom, situation, or other contingent circumstances; but they are generally clean to a miracle, and plentiful places. The travelling carriages stop to

bait there, for it is between towns; the squire comes there occasionally, for he patronizes it, and has all private and public meetings held there. Most probably it is his own property, and its sign the arms of his family; and what is quite as likely, the landlord is his old servant. Half of these places are kept by old servants of the neighbouring families who have married and *retired* to public life. The groom, the coachman, nay the valet or the butler, has married the lady's maid, or the comely laundress, or a daughter of a neighbouring farmer, and there is nothing he can so readily fashion himself to as an inn. It is something after his own way—he is still waiting on somebody, at table, or at carriage. He is knowing in horses and dogs, and he can't be well spared out of the neighbourhood. He is acquainted with all the farmers, and their acquaintance all round, and they come to the house. In nine cases out of ten he has a farm attached to his inn. In other cases, our country innkeeper is a maltster too, or a miller; and these are the country inns for good cheer. O, what cream, what fresh butter, what fresh eggs, what fresh vegetables, what plump tender pullets, what geese and ducks for the roasting, with all appendages of peas and onions, cucumbers and asparagus, can that larder produce which is situated in the Goshen of rural plenty; where the malt-kiln is at hand instead of the druggist's shop; where barley is steeped instead of cocculus; where the hostel has a plentiful garden at its back, and a good farm behind that.

Go up to your bed-chamber; you are delighted with its sweetness—its freshness—its cleanness. You fairly stand to snuff up the air that comes in at the open

window. You turn to admire the clean white bed—the snowy sheets—the fresh carpet—the old-fashioned walnut drawers, and wide elbow-chairs of massy workmanship, with damask cushions, clean, though much worn, which have been purchased at the sale of some ancient manor-house. All is as bright and clean as busy, and country hands can make them. There is lavender in the drawers! You may, indeed, if you please, be laid in lavender; for you have only to look out of your window, and the garden below has whole hedges of lavender, and there are trees of rosemary nailed up your walls to the very window-sills of the room. And then you see such filbert-bushes, such damson, and plum, and apple, and pear trees, that you have visions of apple dumplings, damson tarts, and a hundred other rural dainties. And now, if you want to study the character of the place; if you are staying some few days, and are curious in "the short and simple annals of the poor;" if you want to paint like Morland or Gainsborough; or to vie with Miss Mitford in sun-shiny pictures of an English village, there you are in the very watch-tower of observation.

You look out on the green, and there comes all the population,—the old to talk and smoke their pipes, the young to play at skittles, nine-pins, quoits, or cricket. You see out over fields and farms; whatever, or whoever you meet in your walks,—cottage or hall, man, woman, or child, your landlord can give the whole history and mystery of it; and, besides, as I have said, there every body comes. The clergyman himself comes there sometimes, to meet his neighbours, on parish or other affairs. All the gentlemen-farmers and plodding farmers, the keepers, the labourers,—every

body has some business at one time or another there. There are the privileged guests of the bar, the frequenters of the best parlour, the rustic circle of the kitchen fireside. There the wedding-party comes, and often dines there. There the very followers of the funeral find some occasion or need of comfort to draw them.* There the soldier on furlough halts — the recruits marching to their destination, halt too. If it be a country that is at all frequented for its natural beauty or curiosities, or for sporting, there is always some wild-looking animal or other, a "man at a loose end," ready to guide you to the moors, to act as a marker, to carry your game-bag, or your fishing-basket. In all such places there is a wit, an eccentric, a good singer. The Will Wimbles, the broken-down gentlemen, the never-do-wells, all come there. You may see them and hear them, and when they are gone, may hear all their oddities and their histories; and every evening you shall hear every piece of news, for five miles round, as related and canvassed over by the guests amongst themselves. Many of these landlords are themselves perfect originals; and by their humour, their racy anecdotes,

* In Wales the attenders of a country funeral adjourn, as regularly as they attend the funeral itself, to the ale-house; and it strikes an Englishman very strangely, to meet a funeral going to the church, and to hear the chief mourner, perhaps the widow, crying aloud, and repeating as she goes, all the virtues of the deceased; and in an hour after, to find the whole company seated in the public house, enveloped in a canopy of tobacco-smoke, loud in talk, and drowning their sorrow in their cups. I recollect how my feelings were harrowed by meeting such a funeral, and a widow just so lamenting; but the gentleman with me, a resident of the place, said "O, it is all the better—they run off the poignancy of their feelings by their lamentations. Their grief seems like one of their mountain torrents—loud and rapid, and then it is gone."

and "random shots of country wit" draw numbers to their ingle. If any of my readers have heard old Matthew Jobson, of the Nag's Head, Wythburn, at the foot of Helvelyn, holding forth in the midst of the rustic frequenters of his hearth, they have a good notion of such Bonifaces,—men that can furnish a Wordsworth or a Crabbe with the rough diamond of a story which they set in imperishable gold,—or flash out sparks of native wit that afterwards set the tables of city palaces in a roar.

But lest I should be accused of tempting my readers into the abodes of publicans and sinners, I must again remind them that I am only talking of those quiet, respectable old country inns, where the master and mistress had a character to maintain, had a regard to the opinion of the parson and the squire; and of those only as places of necessary refreshment. As parts and parcels of English rural life, I am bound to describe them; and who has not spent a pleasant hour in such a place with a friend, on a pedestrianizing excursion, or with a rural party at dinner or tea? And who has not rejoiced to escape from night and storms, on wide heaths, or amongst the mountains, to the "shelter of such rustic roof?" Into such a house I remember, years ago, being driven by a wild night of wind, rain, and pitchy darkness, on the edge of Yorkshire, and the cheerful blaze of the fire, and the rustic group round it, as I entered, were a right welcome contrast to the tempestuous blackness without. Wet, and cold, and weary as I was, I had no intention of being conducted to the best parlour of so small a house as this was, in so secluded a part of the country, on a dismal night in October. Whoever is obliged at such a season to be-

take himself to such humble hostel, let him, if he do not find a good fire blazing in the parlour, seat himself in the old chimney-corner: there he is sure of warmth and comfort in a homely way. In summer a rustic inn, in the most obscure district, is pleasant enough; but in winter, beware! Travellers are few —the best parlour is probably not used once a month, for all country incomers know that the old chimney-corner is always warm. Instead, therefore, of being led, as is the regular custom, on the arrival of a respectable looking stranger, into the best parlour, while a fire is lighted, and of waiting, chill and miserable, for its burning up, and for the coming of your tea or supper, watching the smoking, snapping, fizzing sticks, and the reek, refused ascent up the damp chimney, ever and anon, puffing out into the room in clouds—march at once into the common room, or ensconce yourself as a privileged guest into the bar. If you find a fire blazing in the parlour, that is indication that there is passing enough on that road to keep one burning there: if not, the blazing ingle is your spot. There I took my station, with a high wooden screen behind me, a bright hearth before me; and having ordered a beef-steak and coffee, and secured the room over this very one for my lodging, knowing that that too is always dry in winter, I began to notice what company I had got. The scene presented is worth describing, as a bit of rural life. About half a dozen villagers occupied the centre of the great circular wooden screen, at one end of which I was seated. Before them stood the common three-legged round table of the country public-house, on which stood their mugs of ale. The table, screen, fire-irons, floor,

everything had an air of the greatest cleanness. Opposite to me, in one of the great old elbow-chairs, so common in country inns in the north, some of them, indeed, with rockers to them, in which full-grown people sit rocking themselves with as much satisfaction as children, sate an old man in duffil-grey trowsers and jacket, and with his hat on; and close at my left hand a tall, good-looking fellow of apparently fifty-five, who had the dress of a master stone-mason, but a look of vivacity and knowingness, very different to the rest of the company. There was a look of the wag, or the rake about him. He was, in fact, evidently a fellow that in any place or station would be a gay, roystering blade; and if dressed in a court dress, would cut a gallant figure too. He eyed me with that expression which said he only wanted half a word to make himself very communicative. The check which my entrance had given to the talk and laughter which I heard on first opening the door, had now passed, and I found a keen dispute going on, upon the important question of how many quicksets there are in a yard, when planted four inches asunder. The old man opposite I found was what a punster would term a fencing-master,—a planter of fences,—a founder and establisher of hawthorn hedges for the whole country round; and out of his profession the dispute had arisen. The whole question hinged on the simple inquiry, whether a quickset was put in at the very commencement of the line of fence, or only at the end of the first four inches. In the first case there would be evidently nine—in the latter only eight. The matter in dispute was so simple and demonstrable, that one wondered how it could afford a dispute at all. Some,

however, contended there were eight quicksets, and some that there were nine; and to demonstrate, they had chalked out the line of fence with its division into yards, and sub-division into four inches, on the hearth with a cinder; but the dispute still went on as keenly as if the thing were not thus plainly before their eyes, or as disputes continue in a more national assembly on things as self-evident: and many an earnest appeal was made from both sides to the old hedger, who having once given his decision, disdained to return any further reply than by a quiet withdrawal of his pipe from his mouth, a quiet draught of ale, and the simple asseveration of—"Nay, I'm sure!" The debate might have grown as tediously prolix as the debates just alluded to, had not my left-hand neighbour, the tall man of lively aspect, turned to me, and, pointing to the cindery diagram on the hearth, said, "What things these stay-at-home neighbours of mine can make a dispute out of! What would Ben Jonson have thought of such simpletons? Look here! if these noisy chaps had ever read a line of Homer or Hesiod, they would n't plague their seven senses out about nothing at all. Why, any child of a twelve-month old would settle their mighty question with the first word it learned to speak. Eight or nine quicksets indeed! and James Broadfoot there, who should know rather better than them, for he has planted as many in his time as would reach all round England, and Ireland to boot, has told them ten times over. Eight or nine numb-skulls, I say!"

"O!" said I, a good deal surprised—"and so you have read Homer and Hesiod, have you?"

"To be sure I have," replied my mercurial neigh-

bour, "and a few other poets too. I have not spent all my life in this sleepy-headed place, I can assure you."

"What, you have travelled as well as read then?"

"Yes, and I have travelled too, master. Ben Jonson was a stone-mason; and if I am not a stone-mason I am a sculptor, and that is first-cousin to it. When Ben Jonson first entered London with a hod of mortar on his head, and a two-foot rule in his pocket, I dare say he knew no more that he had twenty plays in his head, than I knew of all the cherubims I should carve, and the epitaphs I should cut; and yet I have cut a few in my time, and written them too before-hand."

"O! and you are a poet too?"

He nodded assent, and taking up his mug of ale, and fixing his eyes stedfastly on me over the top of it as he drunk with a look of triumph,—then setting down his mug—"And if you want to know that, you have only to walk into the churchyard in the morning, and there you 'll find plenty of my verses, and cut with a pen of iron too, as Job wished his elegy to be." Here, however, lest I should not walk into the churchyard, he recited a whole host of epitaphs, many of which must have made epitaph-hunters stare, if they really were put on head-stones.

"Well," I said, "you astonish me with your learning and wit. I certainly did not look for such a person in this village—but pray where have you travelled?"

"O! it 's a long story—but this I can tell you—I have gone so near to the end of the world that I could not put sixpence between my head and the sky."

At this the whole company of disputants forgot their quicksets, lifted their heads and cried—"Well done Septimus Scallop! That's a good 'un. If the gentleman can swallow that, he can anything."

"O!" said I, "I don't doubt it."

"Don't doubt it!" they shouted all at once—"don't doubt it? Why, do you think any man ever could get to where the sky was so low as he couldn't get in sixpence between his head and it?"

"Yes he could, and often has done—make yourselves sure of that. If a man has not a sixpence he cannot put it between his head and the sky; and he is pretty near the world's end too, I think."

Here they all burst into a shout of laughter, in the midst of which open flew the door, and a tall figure rushed into the middle of the house, wrapped in a shaggy coat of many capes, dripping with wet, and holding up a huge horn lantern. A face of wonderful length and of a ghastly aspect glared from behind the lantern, and a voice of the most ludicrous lamentation bawled out—"For God's sake, lads, come and help me to find my wagon and horses! I've lost my wagon! I've lost my wagon!" Up jumped the whole knot of disputants, and demanded where he had lost it. The man said that while he went to deliver a parcel in the village the wagon had gone on. That he heard it at a distance and cried, "woa! woa!" but the harder he cried, and the farther he went, the faster it went too. At this intelligence away marched every one of the good-natured crew excepting the wit. "And why don't you go?" I asked.—"Go! pugh! It's only that soft brother of mine, Tim Scallop, the Doncaster carrier. I'll be

bound now that the wagon has n't moved an inch from the spot he left it in. He has heard the wind roaring, and doesn't know it from his own wagon wheels. Here these poor simpletons will go running their hearts out for some miles, and then they will come back and find the horses where he left them. I could go and lay my hand on them in five minutes. But they are just as well employed as in griming Mrs. Tappit's hearth-stone. Never mind; — I was telling you of what the hostler said to Ben Jonson when Ben was reeling home early one morning from a carouse, and Ben declared that he was never so pricked with a horse-nail-stump in his life—

BEN.—Thou silly groom
Take away thy broom,
And let Ben Jonson pass:

GROOM.—O! rare Ben!
Turn back again,
And take another glass!

Septimus Scallop laughed at the hostler's repartee, and I laughed too, but my amusement had a different source from his. There was something irresistibly ludicrous in the generous rushing forth of the whole company to the aid of the poor carrier, except the witty brother! But he was quite right: in about an hour, in came the good-natured men, streaming with rain liked drowned rats, and declaring that after running three miles and finding no wagon, they bethought themselves of turning back to where the carrier said it was lost; and there they had nearly run their noses against it, standing exactly where he left it.

So much for the village inn. Every traveller must

have seen in such a place many a similar piece of country life. A new class of ale-houses has sprung up under the New-Beer-Act, which being generally kept by people without capital, often without character; their liquor supplied by the public brewers, and adulterated by themselves; have done more to demoralize the population of both town and country, than any other legislative measure within the last century. In these low, dirty, fuddling places, you may look in vain for

> The whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
> The varnished clock that clicked behind the door.

In manufacturing towns, and agricultural districts, they alike multiply the temptations to the poor man, and by their low character are sure to deteriorate his own. Against the swarms of these, in many places the quiet respectable old village inn has little chance. It must disappear, or be kept by a different and a worse class of people; and when it goes, it goes with Goldsmith's graphic lamentation—for very different are the *shops* that succeed it:

> Vain transitory splendours! could not all
> Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
> Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
> An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.
> Thither no more the peasant shall repair,
> To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
> No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
> No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
> No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
> Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
> The host himself no longer shall be found
> Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
> Nor the coy maid, half willing to be prest,
> Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

CHAPTER IX.

POPULAR PLACES OF RESORT.—WAKES, STATUTES, AND FAIRS.

Besides the remains of the ancient festivals, the country people find a great source of amusement in these gatherings. The Wake is the parochial feast of the dedication of the church. It has now dwindled into a village holiday, shorn by the Reformation of all its ecclesiastical and sacred character. But it furnishes a certain point in every year, in every individual parish, to which the rural people can look forward as a point of rest and mutual rejoicing. It is a time which leads them to clean up their houses, to look forward and prepare for a renewal of their wardrobe; and which cheers the spirit of many an otherwise solitary and labouring person with the prospect of a short season of relaxation, a short pause in the otherwise ever-going machinery of servitude. The old people,—parents, and grand-parents,—say, when telling of their children out at service, in some distant place, or married and settled far off: "Well, well, we shall see them at the wake. They 'll all be here, thank God, well and hearty, I hope." The children,

as they groan at times under the tedium of perpetual labour, suddenly cheer up, and say,—"Well but we shall go home at the wake:"—a thing which is regularly stipulated for at hiring: and the vision of that joyful time, though but a moment in itself, puts out all the twilight of their weary waiting. The time comes. The merry bells of the church are ringing on the anniversary of that church's completion, perhaps five, or seven hundred years ago. Merrily they ring; and simple and glad creatures, young maidens, and youths, and comely pairs with a troop of children round them, hear them, as they come over hill and dale, approaching from all quarters the place of their nativity, and the place of their ancestors: the one place, however small, and however obscure, tinged all over with the memories of childhood, and filled with the stories and legends that were interwoven with the very grain of their minds by their parents' recitals in early life—the one place, therefore, which seems the most important in the universe. They, like the Chinese, always place in the map of their simple thoughts their native village, in the centre of the earth. Over hill and dale they are coming, all in their holiday array; and in many a bright little cottage, basking in the sunshine of morning, are eager hearts looking out for them; wondering how Grace and Thomas will look; whether they are much altered; and whether the children of the married ones will be much grown. The beauty of these village feasts is, that they do not occur all at one time, so that the friends and acquaintance of the inhabitants of one place, come pouring in to see them, and are ready in their turn to receive them at their feast.

They are times of pleasant exchange of hospitalities and renewals of simple friendships. Out of doors there are stalls of toys and sweetmeats, and whirligigs for the children; within, there is, for once, plum-pudding and roast beef, and an infinity of such talk as best pleases their tastes. Old notes of by-gone years are compared. Many are recalled to remembrance who have not been thought of for a long time. The hearts of the old are warmed by retracing their early days, early exploits, and early acquaintance, with all the pleasant exaggerations of memory; and the young listen, and think with wonder on those good old times.

In some old-fashioned places, these feasts are named from and mingled with the remains of other old church rites. At Ilkeston, in Derbyshire, it is still called the Cross-Dressing, and the cross in the village is dressed up with oaken boughs, with their leaves gilt and spangled. At Tissington, near Dovedale, the Well-Dressing, or Well-Flowering, when they dress up a beautiful spring with flowers, and have dances and processions, and much merriment, is their great feast, though it may not happen to fall exactly on the day of the dedication of the church. At Blidworth, in the old demesnes of Sherwood, it is their Rocking, I suppose from its happening to fall on the day after Twelfth-day, or St. Distaff's-day, the custom of which is described by Herrick ·—

> Partly work, and partly play,
> Ye must on St. Distaff's day:
> From the plough soone free your teame,
> Then come home and fother them.
> If the maides a spinning goe,
> Burne the flax, and fire the tow.

Bring in pails of water then,
Let the maides bewash the men:
Give St. Distaff all the right,
Then bid Christmas sport good night.
And next morrow every one,
To his owne vocation.

In different villages, different customs have allied themselves to the great annual feast, the season of meeting of friends and relatives. Long may these meetings remain bound up with, at least, one bright day in the year. I trust, however knowledge and refinement may extend themselves, they will never refine these rural holidays away. Let them root out cruelty and rudeness, and drunkenness, as they have done already in a great degree—for where now are bull-baitings, bear-baitings, dog-fights, and cock-fights, which twenty years ago were the invariable accompaniments and great attractions of these wakes? Let Christian knowledge root out these things, and thus perfect this one white season of the cottager's year—making it entirely an occasion for cultivating the best affections, and knitting together family ties.

STATUTES.

These, which are called provincially STATITZ, or STATICE, are meetings for hiring of farm and household servants, "according to statutes made and provided," and are held in certain central and convenient places. They are attended merely by farmers, and people who happen to want men or maid-servants, and by the servants themselves. By the latter they are looked forward to with much interest. They furnish occasion for a holiday. They are for the time their own mas-

ters, having left, or being about to leave their places, and either to re-engage themselves, or to seek new ones. They here meet their old acquaintances, and compare notes of the past year, of the character of the different places they have had; of what extraordinary has befallen them; and are full of new schemes and speculations as to where they shall go; what advance of wages they shall obtain; in what capacity they shall hire themselves. In many parts of the country he who offers himself as a shepherd, appears with a lock of wool in his hat, placed under the band; the wagoner has a bit of whipcord stuck there; the milk-maid in her bonnet a tuft of cow-hair; and the general run of farm-servants are conspicuous enough as to what they are by their carters'-frocks, or slops, hob-nailed ankle boots, and out-of-door, half-waggish, half-sheepish looks.

It is a true country scene, to see all these rude sons of the soil collected together from their farm-yards, and solitary fields, where, far from towns, they have gone whistling after the plough, sowing, or gathering in harvest; and the girls that have been scrubbing, churning, and milking, and occasionally helping in the hay or corn fields, here dressed out in their rustic finery, and shewing such robust forms and rosy faces as might astonish our over-delicate citizens. To see the farmers going amongst them, inquiring after their accomplishments and qualities, and cheapening them much as they would cheapen a horse; and their no less wary wives negotiating with the buxom damsels of the mop and pail. These matters all satisfactorily disposed of, and the *Earnest*, or money given on account of future services, or as it is otherwise called, the *Fast-*

ening-penny, from its formerly being a penny, though now a shilling, being given, away go the farmers and farmeresses, and leave the lads and lasses to a day of jollity and fun. The swains lose no time in selecting each his *chere-amie* for the day; and the afternoon is spent in eating, flirting, drinking, and dancing, and then, all separate their several ways, for at least another year.

Some of these STATUTES in agricultural districts bring together a vast concourse of people. I once went, when a boy, with my schoolmaster to Polesworth Statute, in Warwickshire, and well remember that such was the crowd, that although I saw a penny on the ground, and made many attempts to stoop down and pick it up, I found it impossible to do it. In Northumberland, Durham, and the south of Scotland, similar meetings are held, where the Hinds hire their Bondages.

FAIRS.

Statutes are places where the working class of the rural districts amuse themselves, but fairs are great sources of pleasure to all classes of country people. The farmers, and their wives and daughters; the villagers of all descriptions; the cottagers from the most secluded retreats; the squire and his family from the hall, all flock to the fair of their county town, and find some business to be transacted, and a world of pleasure to be enjoyed. There are cheese, cattle, horses, poultry, geese, and a hundred other things to be sold; and multitudes of household articles, clothing, and trinkets to be bought; and besides all this, a vast of seeing and being seen to be done. I will describe the great October Fair of Nottingham, called Goose-

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Fair, as a good specimen of a country fair on a large scale.

In the country, for many miles round, this fair is looked forward to by young and old with views of business and recreation for months: and what was done, and said, and seen at Goose-Fair; who was met there, and what matches were made, serve for conversation for months afterwards. The buyers and sellers of cheese, apples, onions, and a variety of other articles, are making their preparations to be there; some of them from distant counties; horse-jockeys are getting ready their strings of horses; young people are putting their wardrobes in order, and expecting all that such young people do expect on such occasions. In the town, two or three days before, the signs of the approaching fair increase. Huge caravans incessantly arrive, with their wild beasts, theatricals, dwarfs, giants, and other prodigies and wonders. Then come trotting in those light, neat, covered wagons, containing the contents of sundry bazaars that are speedily to spring up. As you go out of the town at any end, you meet caravan after caravan, cart after cart, long troops of horses tied head and tail, and groups of those wild and peculiar-looking people, that are as necessary to a fair as flowers are to May;—all kinds of strollers, beggars, gipsies, singers, dancers, players on harps, Indian jugglers, Punch and Judy exhibitors, and similar wandering artists and professors.

For some days before the general fair commences, the horse-fair is going on. You recognise all the knowing-ones in horse-flesh from all the country round; country gentlemen and smart young farmers

and cunning jockeys with their long drab great coats, short old boots, and their jockey whips stuck carelessly under their arm. Horses of all kinds, light and heavy, full blood, half blood, and no blood at all, are ridden and driven to shew their action, along the pavement in all directions, as if the aim of the riders was to run over everybody they could, and break their own necks into the bargain.

Then on the authentic day of the fair, forth comes the procession of the corporation to proclaim the fair, and march up the market-place and down again in their scarlet robes, mayor and aldermen, the mace borne and the trumpet blown before them, and the beadles with their staves behind. Having made this procession to the wonder of all children, and sight-loving adults, they ascend into the Town Hall, there, oddly enough, called the Exchange, and the crier proclaims the fair from the charter, at the prompting of the town-clerk. The fair is proclaimed, and is already in existence. There is the market-place, an area of six acres, jammed full of stalls, shows, bazaars, and people. From the earliest hour of the morning, wagons loaded with cheese have been arriving, which are now seen on one side of the market-place, pitched down in piles, and in quantities enough, one would think, to serve all England for a twelvemonth. There are the farmers, and their wives and daughters, well wrapped up in good market coats, with numerous capes, surveying with pride the workmanship of their hands, and the product of their summer's dairy; and there are the dealers, busy amongst it with their cheese-tasters, tasting and chaffering, and buying, and sending off their purchases by wagons to the wharfs.

It is incredible in what a little time those great heaps of cheese vanish from the stones, and nuts and onions in abundance.

The whole market-place is now one mass of moving people, and unintermitted din. Wombwell's Menagerie displays all its gigantic animals on its scenes; Holloway's "Travelling Company of Comedians," are dancing with harlequin and clown in front of their locomotive theatre; wonderful women, and children, and animals; wonderful machinery, panoramas, and prodigies are displayed on all sides in pictorial enormity, and the united sounds of Wombwell's fine band of musicians in their beef-eater costume, the band of Holloway, the smaller ones of other shows, and the bawlings, and invitings, and oratorical declamation of a dozen different showmen, with bellowing of gongs, and clashing of cymbals, make up a sound enough to drive to distraction more swine than ran into the sea of Gennesaret, but which seems, notwithstanding, wonderfully delightful to ears grown weary of country quiet. It is curious to see the numbers pouring in and out of these places; to see the dense crowd of upturned faces collected before every show where there are antics playing, and clowns and fools talking nonsense for their entertainment. To hear the hearty laughs which follow their standing jokes, is to feel how cheaply pleasure can be furnished to hungry spirits.

But the crowd of fair-goers walking round and round this annual Babel! During the morning, business is the chief engrossment; but from noon till eleven or twelve o'clock at night, pleasure is the pursuit. The farmers' daughters, who stood in their

caped coats before their piles of cheese, are now metamorphosed into most extraordinary belles, and have found beaus as dashing as themselves. At all the stalls, purchases of gingerbread, sweetmeats, nuts, and oranges, are going on; and through the bazaars—these modern additions to fairs, goes a perpetual stream of gay people, admiring the endless variety of things that are there displayed on either hand. Tea-caddies, work-boxes of rosewood and pearl, china, cut-glass, drums and trumpets, and all kinds of toys; bracelets and necklaces, and all species of female trinkets; fans, and parlour bellows, figures in porcelain and painted wood; purses, musical boxes, and, in short, all the thousand contents of a bazaar.

This afternoon portion of the fair is called the gig-fair, because people come driving in their gigs to it: *i. e.* it is the pleasure-fair, where smart people from all quarters come to see, and to be seen. The second day of the fair, I believe, is the earliest on which *very genteel* people make their appearance, and then you may often see numbers of country families of good standing mingling in the moving mass of Vanity Fair. It is amusing enough to sit at a window, and look over all the stirring and motley scene. To see the eternal stream of smart dresses and fair faces go by. Round and round they move, in one dense throng, every one apparently driven forward by the weight of the coming crowd; and, taking into consideration the press, the noise, the weariness of such thronged and continued walking, one is apt to wonder how any human beings can find pleasure in it. But that they do find pleasure, and an intense pleasure, their eager and multitudinous flocking thither sufficiently denote.

They come out of a quietness that presents a little noise and dissipation as an agreeable contrast. They come to attractions adapted to their taste. The greater part of them are full of youth and expectation. There is no occasion on which so many country flames are struck up as at a fair. And, in truth, you see numbers of fine healthy forms of both sexes in this crowd, and beautiful faces in numbers sufficient to make you feel with the poet:

> The ancient spirit is not dead;
> Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
> Proud was I that my country bred
> Such strength, a dignity so fair.

It is a time, in fact, of universal country jollity, pleasure-taking, love-making, present-making, treating, and youthful entertainment, enjoyed to an extent that people of different tastes can form no conception of. Many an important connexion is dated from the fair; many a freak, a pleasure, a piece of wit and fun are thence registered, and talked of at country fire-sides to the latest period of life; and these are all so much part and parcel of our common nature, that there must be a stony place in the heart which does not strongly sympathise with the actors and partakers of them. Joy, therefore, to all fair-goers! and with the growth of greater intelligence and taste, long may the healthy capacity of being lightly pleased retain its hold on the robust forms and sweet faces of English Rural Life.

I have often thought that we have artists who go all over the world in quest of novelties of scene, costume, character, and grouping, many of whom, if they came to an English fair, with minds capable of entering

into what they saw, might give us scenes and figures of more real interest than they often bring back after years of absence. The dancing-scene before Holloway's; the figures and coquetting of country belles and their lovers; and the picturesque simplicity of the old men gazing like children on some wonder-promising showman, and now full of consternation and amaze at some of them finding their purses clean vanished from their pockets, would form good subjects for the pencil.

CHAPTER X.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE. HISTORY OF THEIR CHANGES, AND PRESENT STATE.

A mighty revolution has taken place in the sports and pastimes of the common people. They, indeed, furnish a certain indication of the real character of a people, and change with the changing spirit of a state. A mighty revolution has taken place in this respect, within the last thirty years, in England, and that entirely produced by the change of feeling, and advance of character. But if we look back through the whole

course of English history, we shall find the sports and pastimes of the people taking their form and character from the predominant spirit of the age; in a great measure copied from the amusements and practices of their superiors, and always influenced by them. While the feudal constitution of society prevailed, and chivalry was in vogue, the sports of the common people had a certain chivalric character. They saw jousts and tourneys, and feats of archery, and they jousted and tilted, and shot at butts. Tilting at the quintain was, in all the chivalric ages, a popular game. It was a Roman pastime, instituted for military practice, and continued for the same object by the feudal nations; and was adopted by the common people as a favourite game, because both the laws of chivalry and their slender finances prevented them taking part in jousts and tourneys. In Strutt may be found descriptions and quaint illustrative engravings of the various kinds of this game. "The Quintain," says Strutt, quoting from Vegetius, *de re militari*, Menestrier and others, "originally, was nothing more than the trunk of a tree, or post set up for the practice of the tyroes in chivalry. Afterwards a staff, or spear was fixed in the earth, and a shield being hung upon it, was the mark to strike at; the dexterity of the performance consisted in striking the shield in such a manner as to break the ligatures and bear it to the ground. In process of time this diversion was improved, and instead of the staff and the shield, the resemblance of a human figure, carved in wood, was introduced. To render the appearance of this figure more formidable, it was generally made in the likeness of a Turk, or a Saracen, armed at all

points, having a shield upon his left arm, and brandishing a club, or a sabre in his right. Hence, this exercise was called by the Italians—'running at the armed man, or at the Saracen.' The quintain thus fashioned, was placed upon a pivot, and so contrived as to move round with facility. In running at this figure, it was necessary for the tilter to direct his lance with great adroitness, and make his stroke upon the forehead, between the eyes, or upon the nose; for, if he struck wide of those parts, especially upon the shield, the quintain turned about with much velocity, and in case he was not exceedingly careful, would give him a severe blow upon the back with the wooden sabre held in the right hand; which was considered as highly disgraceful to the performer, while it excited the laughter and ridicule of the spectators. When many were engaged in running at the Saracen, the conqueror was declared from the number of strokes he had made, and the value of them. For instance, if he struck the image upon the top of the nose between the eyes, it was reckoned for three; if below the eyes upon the nose, for two; if under the nose to the point of the chin, for one; all other strokes were not counted: but, whoever struck upon the shield, and turned the quintain round, was not permitted to run again upon the same day, but forfeited his courses as a punishment for his unskilfulness." Brande, in his Popular Antiquities, tells us that the Saracen was often armed with a bag of sand instead of a sabre, which came upon the back of the unlucky tilter with such violence as to fling him to the earth with no enviable shock. Various were the quintains, according to the age in which they were used, or the means of

the players. In some cases the quintain was merely a common stake with a board fastened to it; in others, it was a post with a cross-bar moving on a pivot, something like a turnstile, with the sand-bag at one end of the bar, and the board, or shield at the other. In others, it was a water-butt set upon a post, so as to throw its contents over the tilter if he struck it unskilfully. In others, it was a living person holding a shield. There was also the water-quintain. "A pole, or a mast," says Fitzstephen, "is fixed in the midst of the Thames, during the Easter holidays, with a strong shield attached to it; and a boat being previously placed at some distance, is driven swiftly towards it by the force of oars, and the violence of the tide, having a young man standing at the prow, who holds a lance in his hand with which he is to strike the shield; and if he be dexterous enough to break the lance against it, and retain his place, his most sanguine wishes are satisfied. On the contrary, if the lance be not broken, he is sure to be thrown into the water, and the vessel goes away without him; but, at the same time, two other boats are stationed near to the shield, and furnished with many young persons, who are in readiness to rescue the champion from danger." It appears to have been a very popular pastime, for the bridge, the wharfs, and the houses near the river, were crowded with people on this occasion, who came, says the author, to see the sports, and make themselves merry.

Running at the quintain continued to be a favourite game till Queen Elizabeth's time; and was universal throughout the country. Plott, in his History of Oxfordshire, mentions it, and Laneham describes a

curious instance of it exhibited at Kenilworth during the entertainment given by the Earl of Leicester to Queen Elizabeth. There was, he says, a solemn country bridal; when, in the castle was set up a quintain for feats of arms, where, in a great company of men and lasses, the bridegroom had the first course at the quintain, and broke his spear *tres hardiment.* But his mare in his manage did a little stumble, that much-adoe had his manhood to sit in his saddle. But after the bridegroom had made his course, rose the rest of the band, awhile in some order; but soon after tag and rag, cut and long tail; where the specialty of the sport was to see how some for his slackness had a good bob with the bag, and some for his haste to topple downright, and come tumbling to the post. Some striving so much at the first setting out that it seemed a question between man and beast whether the race should be performed on horseback or on foot; and some put forth with spurs, would run his race byas, among the thickness of the throng, that down they came together, hand over head. Another, while he directed his course to the quintain, his judgment would carry him to a man among the people; another would run and miss the quintain with his staff, and hit the board with his hand."

Boys imitated this game on their own scale, drawing one another on wooden horses to the quintain, or running at it on foot; and various other rustic exercises were derived from it. Of archery we need not speak, every one knowing how universal it was during the feudal ages; and quarter-staff, quoits, flinging the hammer, pitching the bar, and similar games were the offspring of the same state of society.

Playing at ball and at bowls were very ancient and kingly sports, and became general amongst the people. They were ancient classical games, and no doubt were introduced by the Romans into this country. They are mentioned both in the oldest metrical romances, and the oldest of our popular ballads. Tennis courts were common in England in the sixteenth century, and the establishment of such places countenanced by the monarchs. Henry VIII. was a tennis player. Fives courts, and places for the practice of a variety of ball-games,—hand-ball, balloon-ball, stool-ball, principally played at by women, hurling, foot-ball, golf, bandy, stow-ball, pall-mall, club-ball, trap-ball, tip-ball, and that which is now become the prince of English ball-games, cricket.

Another circumstance in the feudal ages, which contributed to promote these and other games, was, that towns were few. The majority of the common people, living in the country; in forests and fields; watching the game, or cultivating the lands, or tending the herds and flocks of their lords, on open downs and wastes, naturally congregated with greater zest in villages after the day's tasks were over, and entered into amusements with the light-heartedness of children; for they were as ignorant of all other cares, of book-learning, and what was going on in the world, at a distance, as children. Hence their social pleasures were of an Arcadian stamp—they danced, they leaped, they wrestled, they kicked the foot-ball, or flung the hand-ball, the quoit, or the bar.

But another circumstance which tended to fashion their amusements was, that the feudal ages were also the ages of the Catholic church; a church which de-

lighted to amuse the imaginations of the people with shows, pageants, miracle-plays, and mysteries. The church festivals were all scenes of holiday, feasting, and wonderment. Processions, and representations of the acts and persons of their religious faith, kept them fixed in admiration and insatiable delight. The churches were the first and only theatres. In them all scripture subjects, personages, doctrines, and even opinions were represented, and brought palpably before the wondering people, in mysteries, moralities, and miracle-plays. Things which now would justly be deemed the most revolting blasphemies and desecrations of holy things, were then gravely brought out by the church, for the entertainment and edification of the people. I have already shewn something of this in speaking of the religious festivals, as celebrated in Catholic countries, but we can only see these things in their full growth, by looking back into the middle ages. The theatrical exhibitions of London in the twelfth century were of this kind; representations of the miracles wrought by confessors, and the sufferings of holy martyrs. But these did not suffice. These ecclesiastical actors penetrated into the Holy of Holies, and dared to represent the sacred Trinity before the eyes of the mob. In the mystery called Corpus-Christi, or Coventry-Play, being played in a moveable theatre, by the mendicant friars of Coventry, the Deity himself is represented seated on his throne, delivering a speech commencing thus:

Ego sum de Alpha et Omega, principium et finis.
My name is knowyn God and Kynge,
My worke for to make now wyl I wende,
In myself now resteth my reyninge,
It hath no gynnyng, ne noe ende.

The angels then enter, singing from the church service, "To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein; to Thee the cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts." Lucifer next makes his appearance, and desires to know if the hymn they sang was in honour of God or of himself? The good angels readily reply, in honour of God; the evil angels incline to worship Lucifer, and he presumes to seat himself on the throne of the Deity, who then banishes him into hell.

In the mysteries, the Devil and his angels seem to have been the principal comic actors; and by all kind of noises, strange gestures, and contortions excited the laughter of the people. At many of these plays the kings and their courts, all the nobility and gentry of the time, as well as the people, would sit with the highest delight, nine hours a day, for six and eight days together. Nay, at the moralities, which were not representations of facts, but moral reasonings and dialogues, carried on by Virtues, Vices, Good Doctrine, Charity, Faith, Prudence, Discretion, Death, and the like, they would sit equally long. The Scotch were as persevering in these amusements as our own ancestors. They are represented as sitting "frae nine houris afoir none till six houris at evin," at the representation of Sir David Lindsay's "Satyr of the Three Estates," and in 1535, in the reign of the accomplished James IV. Here, however, Sir David, the Chaucer of Scotland, had turned the weapons of the church against itself, and through its favourite medium, the drama, uttered the most caustic satire against it from the mouths of Rex Humanitas, Wantonness, Solace, Placebo, Sensualitie, Homeliness,

Flattery, Falsehood, Deceit, Chastity, Divine Correction, etc. etc.

Besides the church too, during the feudal times, there were the festivities kept up in the castles and halls at Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and other great days, on which all kinds of pageants, mimings, masks, and frolics, were shewn to their followers and dependents, by the great feudal lords; and their minstrels, mimes, and jesters were made to exert their arts for their gratification. Wandering minstrels and jongleurs went from house to house, and from village to village, following their profession of entertainers of the people. All these things combined to fashion the popular taste, and the popular amusements, and all at the Reformation received their death-blow. It was not, indeed, an instant death, but it was a slow and certain one; for though the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth seemed to carry pageants and tourneys to their climax, the living principle of them was dying out. The Catholic church, the great mother of all festivals and mysteries, was overturned, and in the dispersion of its property the rise of new classes and a new state of things originated; and so far had these causes taken effect in the reign of James I., that he made public proclamation in 1618, that "Whereas, we did justly, in our progress through Lancashire, rebuke some Puritans and precise people, in prohibiting and unlawfully punishing of our good people for using their lawful recreations and honest exercises on Sundays and other holidays after the afternoon service, it is our will that, at the end of divine service, our good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged, from any lawful

recreation, such as dancing, either for men or women; archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any other harmless recreation; nor for having of May-games, Whitsun-ales, and Morris-dances, and the setting up of May-poles, and other sports therewith used."

But the day was gone by. A new spirit was arisen, and was destined soon to shew itself with overwhelming power. The days of Cromwell and the Puritans were coming, when all these things were to be denounced as popish and heathenish. The spirit and language at that time becoming universally such as that displayed by Thomas Hall, B.D., Pastor of Kings-Norton, in his Funebria Floræ, or the Downfall of May-games in 1660, in which he says, "The city of Rome, in the county of Babylon, has contrary to the peace of our lord, his crown and dignity, brought in a pack of practical fanatics, viz.: ignorants, Atheists, Papists, drunkards, swearers, swashbucklers, maid-marians, morris-dancers, maskes, mummers, May-pole stealers, health-drinkers, gamesters, lewd men, light women, contemners of magistrates, affronters of ministers, rebellious to masters, disobedient to parents, misspenders of time, and abusers of the creature, etc."

This republican Puritanism, in its genuine style, was now again about to cease, but the effects of it could never be obliterated by subsequent kings. Compare the popular amusements as enumerated by Burton in his "Anatomie of Melancholie," a short time before the Commonwealth, with those which remained thirty years ago,—the period when they expired nearly altogether, and gave way to a new era. "Cards, dice, hawks, and hounds," he says, "are the recrea-

tions of the gentry; ringing, bowling, shooting, playing with keel-pins, tronks, coits, foot-balls, balowns, running at the quintain, and the like, are the common recreations of country folk. Riding of great horses, running of rings, tilts and tournaments, horse-races and wild-goose chases, are desports of greater men. The country hath its recreations of May-games, feasts, fairs and wakes; both town and country, bull-baitings and bear-baitings, in which the countrymen and citizens greatly delight; dancing of ropes, jugglings, comedies, tragedies, artillery-gardens, and cock-fightings, Whitsun-ales, maskes, jesters, gladiators, and tumblers."

Thirty years ago, tilts and tournaments had gone after their parent chivalry; archery had fallen before gunpowder; Whitsun-ales had followed many another ecclesiastical merriment; comedies and tragedies had set up their own secular houses apart from the church; and scarcely any of the other amusements were left but bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and similar barbarities. The public mind had become vulgarized and brutalized. The spirit of chivalry, with its pageants and knightly feats, had diffused some sense of grace and graceful emulation amongst the people; the church, amid all its ludicrous shows and absurdities, had conveyed some moral principles; the wandering minstrels had in their lays and ballads excited some feelings of honour, and many a feeling of true nature and homely poetry: but all these sources of inspiration, feeble and mingled with evil as they were, were dried up, and during the long wars of the Hanoverian dynasty the common people seem to have been neglected as rational and immortal beings, and cultivated and educated only as the instruments and

the food of war. Accordingly, the minstrels had dwindled into ballad-singers, the jongleurs into jugglers and mountebanks; the Arcadian amusements of the country—May-games, dances on the green, wrestling and leaping, were nearly extinct; and there remained the very characteristic sports of bull-baiting, bear-baiting, badger-baiting, dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and throwing at cocks on Shrove-Tuesday. Bear and bull baitings were games that our queens Elizabeth and Anne had both delighted in, but the more elegant pastimes of those queens and their subjects had fallen into disuetude, the savage and brutal alone remaining. This was natural enough. From the days of Marlborough to those of Wellington, the common people had been bred for the battle-field,—the food of the great European Moloch of war; and the bloody spirit, which casts out all the fairer spirits of grace and gaiety, had been purposely and avowedly cherished, as the true English spirit. Who that remembers these times, does not recollect the famous speeches of Wyndham and his colleagues in favour of these brutal sports? Who forgets their prognostics that if this spirit was destroyed, there was an end of our martial ascendency? But the point of time had arrived beyond which this spirit could not endure. The brutal and vulgarized condition of the people flashed on the perception of the middle classes, which amid all the noise of war had been progressing in intelligence and refinement. Robert Raikes and Sunday-schools arose. A better spirit, a better sense of our duties and responsibilities towards the people awoke. It was seen, that all over the country the more laudable sports of the village green, and the

village wakes, as quoits, nine-pins, skittles, wrestling, leaping, cricket, and the other ball games; will-pegs, jumping in sacks, and other athletic amusements had lost much of their relish, and were abandoned for the bloody spectacles of the bull-ring and the cock-pit. Attempts were made to counteract this spirit; parliament was petitioned on the subject, and after the repulse given to these attempts by the senators I have alluded to, nothing was so common as to see the bulls led through the villages adorned with ribbons, and bearing on their necks large placards of—"SANCTIONED BY WYNDHAM AND PARLIAMENT!"

I have before me now a curious specimen of the effect of such doctrines on the minds of those even who are, by national authority, the public teachers of the country, in a little volume published in 1819, by a clergyman of the name of Chafin—"An Account of Cranbourn Chase." He says, "cock-fighting also, in the last century, was a favourite diversion, greatly delighted in by persons of all ranks; and there was a nobleman, Lord Albemarle Bertie, who was so found of the amusement, that he attended cock-pits when he was totally blind. And there were but few gentlemen in the country, who did not keep and breed game cocks, and were very anxious and careful in the breeding of them. Frequent matches were made, and there were cock-pits in almost every village, the remains of which are still visible. To this amusement also Cranbourn Chase contributed, for the cocks bred in it were superior to others, both in shape and make, and, as the feeders name it, handled better when brought to their pens; insomuch that Lord Weymouth, of Longleat, an ancestor of the present

Marquis of Bath, for many years had a cock at walk at every lodge in the chase, and the keepers were well rewarded for taking care of them; and when they were brought chickens from Longleat annually, each game-cock was accompanied with two dunghill hens, which became the perquisite of the keeper when the cock was taken away. But *in our days of refinement*, this amusement of cock-fighting hath been exploded, and, in a great measure, abandoned, *being deemed to be barbarous and cruel;* but in this *respect the writer thinks differently, and believes it to be the least so of any diversions now in vogue*, and nothing equal as to cruelty, to horse-racing, in which poor animals are involuntarily forced against their nature to performances against their strength, with whips and spurs, which, in jockey phrase is styled *cutting up*. But in fighting of cocks *the case is totally different;* for, instead of a force against nature, it is an indulgence of natural propensities; for cocks at their walks, and at full liberty, will seek each other for battle, as far as they can hear each other's crowing; and *the arming them with artificial weapons*, when they are brought in the pit to fight, is *the very reverse of cruelty*, for the contest is sooner ended, and sufferings, trifling in comparison to what they would have been, had they fought with their own natural weapons, *by lacerating their bodies, and bruising each other in every tender part.*"

Now, to feel the full force of the Rev. William Chafin's notion of a game that is the least cruel of any diversions now in vogue, it is necessary to consider that these cocks are stimulated to contest by heating food and artificial contrivances, such as keep-

ing them within the sight or crow of their rivals: that they are then clipped almost bare of feathers: the feathers are clipped off their stomachs; their heads cut clean of their wattles; their wings and tails cut short and square; that they are, in fact, metamorphosed from the most gallant-looking of birds into the most bare, comical, quaint, and strutting objects in nature, I was going to say; but they are put out of all nature, and are, lastly, armed with steel or silver spurs of an inch long, sharp as needles. With these they kick and pierce each other, "lacerating their bodies, and bruising each other in every tender part;" fighting till their heads are all one mass of gore; till they are often stark blind, and go staggering about like drunken men, till one has the luck to strike the other clean through the head with his artificial spur. This is a game which a clergyman, a teacher of Christianity, could by custom come to think "the least cruel of all the diversions now in vogue." It is impossible to produce more striking evidence of the effect of a familiarity with cruelty. It is just by the same process that men come to approve of war and slavery. God be praised that all these bloody sports are gone for ever from the soil of England. That bull, bear, and badger baiting, have all, after many a hard contest, been eventually put down; that for some years, so much has the mind of the common people been raised and softened, there have scarcely been any cock-fighters, except *noblemen* and *gentlemen*, whose cock-pits have been the nuisances of their neighbourhoods, and their game-cock caravans, travelling from place to place with these cocks, have offended the public eye. It is a satisfaction to record

that in the year 1835, even this brutal game was made illegal by Act of Parliament, and that through the exertions of Joseph Pease, the only member of Parliament who is a member of the Society of Friends.

Since these atrocities have been exploded, their place has not been supplied by an equal number of more commendable amusements. The people of large towns, in particular, have not substituted a sufficient equivalent. Politics and ale-houses seem, till lately, to have furnished their sole stimulants. There appears to have been a pause in that important portion of human life, amusement, so far as the common people are concerned; but it has been in appearance only. One of the greatest changes that ever took place in human society, has been in this interval maturing. The change from the last stage of worn-out feudalism to the commencement of the era of social regeneration. A change from a system in which the largest portion of mankind was regarded but as the instruments of the luxury and revenge of the wealthy few,—to one in which every part of the human family will be recognised as possessing the same nature, and worthy of enjoying the same domestic and intellectual blessings. A change, in fact, from Gentilism to Christianity; from the condition in which the great of the earth lorded it over the poor, to that in which the common sympathies of our nature will be honoured and obeyed; and a career of intelligence, benevolence, and mutual good-will and good works will begin, to end in a prosperity beyond our present imagination. And already what symptoms of this better state of things break upon us! What

schools, and Mechanics' Libraries and Institutes; what Friendly Societies, and plans on the part of the wealthy for the benefit of the poor. For amusements there has been no time. All workers, both in town and country, have been compelled to plod on solemnly and half-despairingly from day to day, and from year to year. But pleasures of a higher order, and more akin to genuine happiness,—social pleasures and pleasures of the intellect, will open upon and grow upon our more numerous brethren of the operative class. They will find pleasures in books—boundless, unimagined, inexhaustible, inexpressible pleasures;—pleasures in their wives and children, pleasures in their firesides, and in the glorious face of nature, which have hitherto been unknown to their eyes and hearts, sealed up in the frost of ignorance and the contempt of the proud. And already we see the commencement of that new order of pastimes which will assuredly result from this new order of mind. In the country, indeed, you find with pleasure occasionally, in some old-fashioned hamlet, the villagers and farm-servants in an evening tossing the quoit, that relic of the ancient discus; bowling, or playing at skittles; but rustics, in general, look to wakes and fairs for amusement; and yet at wakes you do not see half the sports there used to be,—as running, leaping, jumping in sacks; or aiming at the snuff-boxes balanced on the will-pegs; and where these games do remain, they are too frequently attached to ale-houses, and made gambling baits of. But, in town and country, it is the noble, and as Miss Mitford, the fair historian of rural life, justly calls it, the true English game of cricket, which shews whither the mind of the people

is tending, and what will be the future character of English popular sports.

This game seems to have absorbed into itself every other kind of ball game, trap-ball, bat-and-ball, tip-cat, or foot-ball. Foot-ball, indeed, seems to have almost gone out of use with the inclosure of wastes and commons, requiring a wide space for its exercise; but far and wide is spread the love of cricketing, and it may now be safely ranked as the prince of English athletic games. I will here describe a match of this fine sport, which was played on the 7th and 9th of September, 1835, between the Sussex Club and the Nottingham Club, and the thoughts which it produced in me at the time.

The Nottingham Club challenged the Sussex Club to a match for fifty guineas a-side; and played first at Brighton, where the Sussex men were beaten, who then went to play the Nottingham men on their own ground. The match commenced on Monday, September 7th, and was finished on Wednesday, the 9th, about half-past four o'clock. Tuesday having been a wet day, there was no playing. The Nottingham men beat again, having three wickets to go down. A more animating sight of the kind never was seen.

On Sunday morning early, we saw a crowd going up the street, and immediately perceived that, in the centre of it, were the Sussex cricketers, just arrived by the London coach, and going to an inn kept by one of the Nottingham cricketers. They looked exceedingly interesting, being a very fine set of fellows, in their white hats, and with all their trunks, carpet-bags, and cloaks, coming, as we verily believed, to be beaten. Our interest was strongly excited; and on

Monday morning we set off to the cricket-ground, which lies about a mile from the town, in the Forest, as it is still called, though not a tree is left upon it,—a long, furzy common, crowned at the top by about twenty wind-mills, and descending in a steep slope to a fine level, round which the race-course runs. Within the race-course, lies the cricket-ground, which was enclosed at each end with booths; and all up the forest-hill were scattered booths, and tents with flags flying, fires burning, pots boiling, ale-barrels standing, and asses, carts, and people bringing still more good things. There were plenty of apple and ginger-beer stalls; and lads going round with nuts and with waggish looks, crying—"nuts, lads! nuts, lads!" In little hollows the nine-pin, and will-peg men had fixed themselves to occupy loiterers; and, in short, there was all the appearance of a fair.

Standing at the farther side of the cricket-ground, it gave me the most vivid idea possible, of an amphitheatre filled with people. In fact, it was an amphitheatre. Along each side of the ground ran a bank sloping down to it, and it, and the booths and tents at the ends were occupied with a dense mass of people, all as silent as the ground beneath them; and all up the hill were groups, and on the race-stand an eager, forward-leaning throng. There were said to be twenty thousand people, all hushed as death, except when some exploit of the players produced a thunder of applause. The playing was beautiful. Mr. Ward, late member of parliament for London, a great cricket-player, came from the Isle of Wight to see the game, and declared himself highly delighted. But nothing was so beautiful as the sudden shout, the rush, and

breaking up of the crowd, when the last decisive match was gained. To see the scorers suddenly snatch up their chairs, and run off with them towards the players' tent; to see the bat of Bart Goode, the batsman on whom the fate of the game depended, spinning up in the air, where he had sent it in the ecstasy of the moment; and the crowd, that the instant before was fixed and silent as the world itself, spreading all over the green space where the white figures of the players had till then been so gravely and apparently calmly contending,—spreading with a murmur as of the sea; and over their heads, amid the deafening clamour and confusion, the carrier-pigeon with a red ribbon tied to its tail, the signal of loss, beating round and round as to ascertain its precise position, and then flying off to bear the tidings to Brighton,—it was a beautiful sight, and one that the most sedate person must have delighted to see.

My thoughts on such occasions, overpass the things moving before me, and run on into consequences; and I could not help feeling what a great change the last thirty years had produced in the mind, taste, feeling, and moral character of our working population. What a wide difference was here presented to the rude rabbles formerly assembled to the most barbarous and blackguard amusements imaginable. Why this is a near approach to the athletic games of the Greeks; and no Greek crowd could have behaved with more order and propriety, and an intense interest, excited, not by any vulgar and unworthy cause, but by a fine trial of skill and activity between their townsmen and their countrymen of a distant county. Such an interest arising out of such an emulation, not only shews

a great progression of the public taste, but will wonderfully promote that progression. Here, if we have been disappointed in many other instances, we see the actual and legitimate effect of general education. It is because the general mind is quickened, raised, and made capable of more refined impulses, that twenty thousand people can now sit, day after day, to witness a contest of manly activity and pure skill, and enjoy a high delight without drunkenness and brutal rows. Never was a more respectable collection of people seen; and although there were plenty of booths and tents well supplied with all sorts of eatables and drinkables, and a good many took a necessary refreshment, or a comfortable glass and a pipe as they sat and looked on, at the time we left there were no symptoms of drunkenness, but a sight the most gratifying imaginable—thousands of poor workmen streaming off homewards the moment the game was over, many of them with their children, wives, or sweethearts.

I say, therefore, that my thoughts ran on into consequences, and I saw, in prospect, the great good which this better taste for amusement, this purer species of emulation, will produce. It is a beautiful sight to see men coming from a distant part of England to contend in a noble gymnastic excercise with those of another part of the country; and the spirit of generous rivalry thus is spread wider and wider. You see while a match is impending, what numbers of cricket players are out in the fields, from grown men to boys that can but just wield the lightest bat. You see, even while the great game is going on, boys playing their lesser games in the outskirts of the crowd; and when the match is decided, the spirit is kindled and diffused

farther than ever by the warm discussions of the various merits of the players, and the glory acquired by the best.

This is a spirit which deserves the attention both of the public and the legislature, and if ever we come to see public grounds appropriated to every large town for such exercises, as has been proposed in Parliament by Mr. Buckingham, then not merely cricket but kindred sports will be pursued,—quoits, nine-pins, bowls, archery, leaping and running; all having a direct tendency to strengthen the body and quicken the mind; to counteract both the physical and moral poisons of crowded factories and thickly populated towns.

It may, indeed, be objected, that all such games would lead to betting; but are we to shrink from every useful measure through fear of its abuse? I say fearlessly, let us set the brand of public abhorrence on such a practice, boldly and firmly, and the practice will disappear. It is not long since the brutal practice of boxing had become a mania, and seemed to set all public censure at defiance, but it did but seem,—public censure put it down. Let the higher classes too, sanction these laudable exercises by their presence as a public duty, and the British people will, in my opinion, in coming years, exhibit scenes of beautiful skill, activity and grace, as imposing as Greece ever saw. In the instance here selected, the two most obvious circumstances were,—first, the absence of the higher classes, especially of the ladies; and secondly, the most perfect and admirable decorum of the people.

CHAPTER XI.

WRESTLING.

We must not close this department of our subject, without saying a word or two on wrestling. This exercise, which at one time was almost universal, is now, like many others, fallen into general disuse; and is confined almost entirely to Cornwall and Devon in the west, and the counties of Chester, Lancaster, Cumberland, and Westmorland in the north. These counties, indeed, have always been pre-eminent in the science of wrestling, and have possessed practices peculiar to themselves. Formerly, the citizens of London were great wrestlers. Stow tells us, that in the month of August, about the feast of St. Bartholomew, there were divers days spent in wrestling. The lord mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs being present, in a large tent pitched for that purpose, near Clerkenwell; the officers of the city, namely, the sheriffs, sergeants, and yeomen; the porters of the king's beam, or weighing-house, etc., gave a general challenge to such of the inhabitants of the suburbs as

thought themselves expert in this exercise. In Sewell's History of the Society of Friends, a curious circumstance is recorded connected with this taste of the Londoners for wrestling. Edward Burrough, a young and enthusiastic preacher in that society, which then was newly formed, seeing a ring made for a wrestling match in some part of the city where he was passing, and a man in it awaiting the acceptance of his challenge by some one, suddenly stepped into it, to the great amazement both of the champion and the spectators, "who," says the historian, "instead of some light and airy person, seeing a grave and awful young man," were utterly posed and confounded; and the eloquent and zealous minister, taking advantage of this surprise, told them he was prepared for a contest, but of another sort to what they were looking for; and forthwith gave them such a sermon in his fiery and vehement style of eloquence, which had gained him the name of Boanerges, or the son of thunder, as wonderfully quieted them down, and sent them away in a solemn frame of mind.

This wrestling spirit, however, appears to have vanished for a long period from London as well as the country, and to have been only of late years revived by the West of England, and Westmorland, and Cumberland Clubs. These have drawn together great numbers; the spectators at the anniversary display of the Westmorland club at Chalk-Farm, in the spring of 1837, being about 8000.

Sir Thomas Parkyn, of Bunny Park, in Nottinghamshire, who was a zealous advocate and patron of wrestling, gave an annual prize for the best wrestler, and ordered the continuance of the same in his will;

but it would not take root there, and the only remaining traces of his endeavour are, his book on the Cornish Hug, and his effigy in a niche in Bunny church, in the attitude in which a wrestler receives his antagonist, with his favourite title of Thomas Luctator inscribed over his head.

It is singular that in the two extremities of the country, where wrestling maintains its ancient popularity, adjoining counties, whose rivalry, no doubt, keeps alive the interest in it, should maintain such opposite practices. In some of the northern counties, kicking is allowed, in others it is not. In Devon, kicking shins is a great part of the game; in Cornwall it forms no part of it. Lancashire is famous for its cross-buttock, and Cornwall for its hug. Cornwall and Devon, however, possess unquestionably the pre-eminence in this ancient art, an art which held an eminent rank in the Olympic games of Greece. "The Cornish," says Fuller, "are masters of the art of wrestling, so that if the Olympian Games were now in fashion, they would come away with the victory. Their hug is a crowning close with their fellow combatant, the fruits whereof is his fair fall, or foil at the least." "They learn the art," says Carew, "early in life, for you shall hardly find an assembly of boys in Devon and Cornwall, where the untowardly among them will not as readily give you a muster of this exercise, as you are prone to require it."

A writer in Hone's Every-Day Book, in 1828, says, "No kicks are allowed in Cornwall except the players who are in the ring mutually agree to it. A hat is thrown in as a challenge, which being accepted by another, the combatants strip and put on a coarse loose

kind of jacket, of which they take hold, and of nothing else. Play then commences. To constitute a fair fall, both shoulders must touch the ground at, or nearly the same moment. To guard against foul play, to decide on the falls, and manage the affairs of the day, four or six Sticklers, as the umpires are called, are chosen, to whom all these matters are left. Wrestling thrives in the eastern part of Cornwall, particularly about Saint Austle and Saint Columb. At the latter place, resides Polkinhorne, the champion of Cornwall, and by many considered entitled to the championship of the four western counties; Cann, the Devonshire champion, having declined to meet him, Polkinhorne has not practised wrestling for several years past, while Cann has carried off the prize at every place in Devon that he shewed at. They certainly are both good ones. Parkins, a friend of Polkinhorne's, is a famous hand at these games; and so was Warner of Redruth, till disabled in Feb. 1825, by over-exertion on board the Cambria brig, bound for Mexico."

This writer proceeds to state, that John Knill, Esq. bequeathed the income of an estate to be given in various prizes for racing, rowing, and wrestling; these games to be held every fifth year for ever; and that the first was celebrated in July, 1801, around a mausoleum which he erected in his life-time on a high rock near St. Ives. "Early in the morning, the roads from Helston, Truro, and Penzance, were lined with horses and vehicles of every description, while thousands of travellers on foot poured in from all quarters till noon, when the assembly formed. The wrestlers entered the ring; a troop of virgins dressed in white, danced and chanted a hymn composed for the occasion; the spec-

tators ranged themselves along the hills, and, at length, the mayor of St. Ives appeared in his robes of state. The signal was given; the flags were displayed from the towers of the castle; here the wrestlers exerted their sinewy strength; here the rowers dashed through the waves, and the songs of the damsels added delight to the scene. A dinner and ball at the Union Hotel concluded the day. The games were again celebrated in 1806, 1811, 1816, and 1821, with increased favour and admiration."

So much for Cornish play; that of Devon I have already said, is of a different kind. The Devon wrestlers don't practice the hug, but kick shins dreadfully. For this purpose they have their shoes armed with iron, and before going into the ring, they wrap up their legs with numerous folds of carpeting to defend themselves from the violence of the kicks. "The Devonshire men," says the same writer, who professes to be of neither county, and to admire the champions of both, "have no under-play, nor have they one heaver. Visit a Devon ring, and you will wait a tedious time after a man is thrown ere another appear. After undergoing the necessary preparation for a good kicking, he enters, and shakes his adversary by the hand, and kicks, and lays hold when he can get a fit opportunity. If he is conscious of superior strength, he goes to work, and by force of arm wrests his opponent off his legs, and lays him flat; or if too heavy for this, he carries him round by the hip. But when the men find that they are 'much of a muchness,' it is really tiresome; caution is the word, and the hardest shoe, and the best kicker, carries it. I have seen in Cornwall more persons at these games when the prize has been

a gold-laced hat, a waistcoat, or a pair of gloves, than ever attend the sports in Devon, where the prizes are liberal, for they don't like to be kicked for a trifle; or even at the famed meetings of later days in London, at the Eagle in the City-Road, or the Golden-Eagle in Mile-End. How is this? Why, in the latter places, six, eight, and at farthest twelve standards, are as much as a day's play will admit of; while in Cornwall I have seen forty made in one day. At Penzance, on Monday, 24th ultimo, thirty standards were made, and the match concluded the day following. In Devon, what with the heavy shoes, and thick padding, and time lost in equipment and kicking, half that number cannot be made in a day. I have frequently seen men obliged to leave the ring, and abandon the chance of a prize, owing solely to hurts they have received by kicks from the knee downwards; nay, I have seen Cann's brothers, or relations, obliged to do so. To the eye of a beholder unacquainted with wrestling, the Cornish mode must appear as play; that of Devon—barbarous. It is an indisputable fact that no Cornish wrestler of any note ever frequents the games in Devon, and that whenever those from Devon have played in Cornwall, they have been thrown—Jordans by Parkins, and so on."

I think any person not of Devon must give the preference to the play of Cornwall as more scientific and less savage; but before we proceed to compare the rival champions, let us give a little more display of the Devonshire men by an eye-witness in 1820, who has related his visit to the ring at Exmouth, in the London Magazine, with a great feeling of enjoyment. He was told one morning that there was going to be a wrestling

and that "the Canns would be there; and young Brockenden; and Thorne, from Dawlish; and the men from the moors!" This excited his imagination; as well it might, for there is something about the names of these men, the Canns, the Brockendens, the Widdicombs of the moors, that has a wild, grim, and wrestlerish sound; and accords well with those grey, ancient and romantic moorlands of the western regions of our island. On approaching the ring he found a champion in it. "He was a young man of extremely prepossessing appearance, stripped to the shirt, and enclothed with the linen jacket with a green cock on the back, which I have noticed to be the customary garment. His figure, which in its country garb had not particularly impressed me with its size or strength, now struck me as highly powerful, compact, and beautiful. His limbs were well grown, and strongly set—yet rather slight than otherwise—and his body was easy, slim, and yet peculiarly expressive of power. The fronts of his legs from the knee to the ankle, were armed with thick carpeting, to protect them from the kicks of his antagonist; and even this strange armour did not give to his person the appearance of clumsiness. His neck was bare, and certainly very fine;—but the shape of his head struck me as being the most expressive and *poetical*, (I use the term under correction) I had for a long time beheld—being set off, I conceive, by the way in which his hair was arranged;—and this was dark, hanging in thick *snakish* curls on each side of his forehead, and down the back part of his head: add to all this, a handsome, melancholy, thin countenance, and you will have at once some idea of the young man who now stood

before me. I turned to a countryman near me, and inquired who this youth might be, whose undaunted mien and comely port had so taken my favour captive. 'Who is *that?*' said the man, with a tone of surprise, accompanied with a look of profound pity at my ignorance—'why, one of the *Canns* to be sure!'" But we will pass over the first day's play, and come to the evening of the second day's play. "The first shout of the master of the revels was—'The younger Cann, and Widdicomb of the Moors!' and this was received with a low murmur, and a deep interest which almost smothered sound. The younger Cann was the stoutest of the brotherhood, finely formed and fair-haired. He stripped and accoutred himself immediately: his brothers assisting in buckling his leg-armour, and fastening his jacket. There was evidently a great anxiety in this group, but still the utmost confidence in ultimate success;—and I could not help taking part in the interest of the brothers, and at the same time entertaining a full share of their faith in their champion's triumph. 'And who,' said I to a neighbour, 'are these Canns?' 'They are farmers; and there are five brothers, all excellent wrestlers; but you only see three here to-night.' But the fine young wrestler stepped into the ring, and our conversation ceased.

"The moon was now very clear, full, and bright; and its light fell upon the noble person of Cann, and shewed every curl of his hair. The Moor-man soon joined him—prepared for the conflict. He was a giant in size, and from what I gathered around me, a man of most savage nature. The popular feeling was painfully on Cann's side. After the cup had been pledged, the opponents seized each other with an iron grasp.

Cann stood boldly, but cautiously up, as conscious that he had much to do; and the Moor-man opposed him resolutely and grandly. The struggle was immediate; and Cann, with one terrific wrench, threw his antagonist to the earth;—but he fell so doubtfully on his shoulder, that it seemed uncertain whether he would fall on his back, which is necessary to victory, or recover himself by rolling on his face. Cann looked proudly down upon him, and saw him by a miraculous strain, which resembled that of a Titan in pain, save the fall, by wrenching himself down on his face. His shoulder and side were soiled—but he was not deemed vanquished.

"By the order of the umpires the struggle was renewed, when owing, as I conceived, to the slippery state of the grass, Cann fell on his knees, and the Moor-man instantly hurled him on his back. All was uproar and confusion—but Cann was declared to have received a fall—and gloom spread itself over all! He could not be convinced of the justice of his judges—a common case when the verdict is adverse—and it was in real pain of spirit that he pulled off the jacket.

"Young Brockenden followed next, with another man from the Moors; and he received a doubtful fall which was much cavilled at, but which the judges nevertheless gave against him. It now grew late, and the clouds thickened around, so that the wrestlers could scarcely be perceived. I left the sports somewhat unwillingly; but I could not distinguish the parties, and in truth, I was dispirited at my favourite's being foiled. I heard that the brother Canns retrieved the fame of the family—but the darkness of the night, and the state of the grass, gave no chance,

either to the spectators, or to the wrestlers. In the morning, the ring, the awning, the scaffolding—had vanished; and the young fellows had separated—the Canns to their farms—the men to the moors."

Having now taken a peep at both the Cornish and Devonshire men, let us bring them into contact. In 1826, at the Eagle-Tavern green, City-Road, several matches took place between Devonshire and Cornish men, on the 19th, 20th, and 21st of September. The following exhibition of the struggle between Abraham Cann, the champion of Dartmoor, and Warren of Cornwall, is equal to a bass-relief from a Grecian frieze, and gives a most graphic view of the systems of the two counties. It is from the London Magazine, and evidently by the same writer.

"The contest between Abraham Cann and Warren not only displayed this difference of style, but was attended with a degree of suspense between skill and strength, that rendered it extremely interesting. The former, who is a son of a Devonshire farmer, has been backed against any man in England for 500*l.* His figure is of the finest athletic proportions, and his arm realizes the muscularity of ancient specimens. His power in it is surprising: his hold is like that of a vice, and with ease he can pinion the arms of the strongest adversary, if he once grips them, and keep them as close together, or as far asunder, as he chooses. He stands with his legs apart, his body quite upright, looking down good-humouredly on his crouching opponent. In this instance, his opponent, Warren, a miner, was a man of superior size, and of amazing strength, not so well distributed, however, throughout his frame: his arms and body being too

lengthy in proportion to their bulk. His visage was harsh beyond measure, and he did not disdain to use a little craft with eye and hand, in order to distract his enemy's attention. But he had to deal with a man as collected as ever entered a ring. Cann put in his hand as quietly as if he were going to seize a shy horse, and at length, caught a slight hold between finger and thumb of Warren's sleeve. At this Warren flung away with the impetuosity of a surprised horse. But it was in vain; there was no escape from Cann's pinch, so the miner seized his adversary in his turn, and at length both of them grappled each other by the arm and the breast of the jacket. In a trice Cann tripped his opponent with the toe in a most scientific but ineffectual manner, throwing him clean to the ground, but not on his back, as required. The second heat began similarly. Warren stooped more, so as to keep his legs out of Cann's reach, who punished him for it by several kicks below the knee, which must have told severely if his shoes had been on, after his country's fashion. They shook each other rudely—strained knee to knee—forced each other's shoulders down, so as to overbalance the body —but all ineffectually. They seemed to be quite secure from each other's efforts, as long as they held by the arm and breast-collar, as ordinary wrestlers do. A new grip was to be effected. Cann liberated one arm of his adversary, to seize him by the cape behind; at that instant, Warren, profiting by his inclined posture, and his long arm, threw himself round the body of the Devon champion, and fairly lifted him a foot from the ground, clutching him in his arms with the grasp of a second Antæus. The Cornish men shouted

aloud, 'Well done, Warren!' to their hero, whose naturally pale visage glowed with the hope of success. He seemed to have his opponent at his will, and to be fit to fling him, as Hercules flung Lycas any how he pleased. Devonshire then trembled for its champion, and was mute. Indeed it was a moment of heart-quaking suspense. But Cann was not daunted; his countenance expressed anxiety, but not discomfiture. He was off terra-firma, clasped in the embrace of a powerful man, who waited but a single struggle of his, to pitch him more effectually from him to the ground. Without straining to disengage himself, Cann with unimaginable dexterity, glued his back firmly to his opponent's chest, lacing his feet round the other's knee-joints, and throwing one arm backward over Warren's shoulders so as to keep his own enormous shoulders pressed upon the breast of his uplifter. In this position they stood, at least twenty seconds, each labouring in one continuous strain, to bend the other, one forward, the other backwards. Such a struggle could not last. Warren, with the might of the other upon his stomach and chest, felt his balance almost gone, as the energetic movements of his countenance indicated. His feet too, were motionless, by the coil of his adversary's legs round his; so, to save himself from falling backward, he stiffened his whole body from the ankles upwards, and these last being the only liberated joints, he inclined forward from them, so as to project both bodies, and prostrate them in one column to the ground together. It was like the slow and poising fall of an undermined tower. You had time to contemplate the injury which Cann, the undermost,

would sustain, if they fell in that solid, unbending posture to the earth. But Cann ceased bearing upon the spine as soon as he found his supporter going in an adverse direction. With a presence of mind unrateable, he relaxed his strain upon one of his adversary's stretched legs, forcing the other outwards with all the might of his foot, and pressing his elbow on the opposite shoulder. This was sufficient to whisk his man undermost the instant he unstiffened his knee—which Warren did not do till more than half-way to the ground, when from the acquired rapidity of the falling bodies, nothing was discernible. At the end of the fall, Warren was seen sprawling on his back, and Cann, whom he had liberated to save himself, had been thrown a few yards off, on all-fours. Of course the victory should have been adjudged to this last. When the partial referee was appealed to, he decided, that it was not a fair fall, as only one shoulder had bulged the ground, though there was evidence on the back of Warren that both had touched it pretty rudely. After much debating, a new referee was appointed, and the old one expelled: when the candidates again entered the lists. The crowning beauty of the whole was, that the second fall was precisely a counterpart of the first. Warren made the same move, only lifting his antagonist higher, with the view to throw the upper part of his frame out of play. Cann turned himself exactly in the same manner, using much greater effort than before, and apparently more put to it by his opponent's great strength. His share, however, in upsetting his supporter was greater this time, as he relaxed one leg much sooner, and adhered closer to the chest during

the fall; for at the close he was seen uppermost, still coiled round his massive adversary, who admitted the fall, starting up, and offering his hand to the victor."

Since then Polkinhorne of St. Columb has encountered Cann, and thrown him, and is, or was, the acknowledged champion of the West. He is the keeper of the principal inn at St. Columb, where I on one occasion stopped, having shortly before taken a half-penny ticket from his dethroned rival, Cann of Dartmoor, at the foot-bridge, between Plymouth and Devonport, where he was, if he be not yet, stationed.

CHAPTER XII.

FAVOURITE PURSUITS OF ENGLISH COTTAGERS AND WORKMEN.

In my last chapter I gave a general view of the present rural sports and pastimes of the peasantry—perhaps as it regards wrestling, more prominently than some readers might think judicious. But what *is* prominent in the country life of any part of England, it is my bounden duty to set before my readers; and there is no feature of English life more remarkable than the sanguine attachment of the people of some particular parts to particular sports; more especially where those sports have relaxed their ancient hold on the people in all other districts, or have refused to be engrafted on other districts; as golf continues to be one of the prime sports of Scotland, but will not travel across the Tweed. Let us now, before closing the department of this work appropriated to the peasantry, notice some characteristic features, which I think must strongly interest us all.

After all, the happiness of a people is not found in their amusements. Amusements may indicate, in a certain degree, that a people is happy; but real happiness is a thing of a more domestic nature. It is a

Lar, and belongs to the household, or is to be found in the quiet and enclosed precincts of home gardens. A great portion of the happiness of the common people is therefore little perceived, for it is unobtrusive; and consists in following out those peculiar biases and *penchants*, which in higher personages are termed genius. The genius of the working classes, which, from its deriving little help from science, or field of exercise from circumstance, is seldom admitted to be genius at all, still exhibits itself in a variety of ways, and contributes at once to their prosperity, their happiness, and to the stamping of individual character. A great deal of it is necessarily exerted in their particular trades, and produces all that is beautiful and exquisite in handicraft arts. That which gives an artizan eminence in the workshop of his master, would probably have produced specimens of art that would have claimed the admiration of the whole community. Those glorious specimens of architectural perfection, which adorn our chief cathedrals, the work of the middle ages, are the evidences of masonic skill, which in this age might probably have been employed on our plainer structures, or in building steam-engines, or elaborating some piece of plate, or carving the handles of parasols. Circumstance has much to do in the decision of the fate of all genius and ingenuity. It is a striking fact, that the greater number of artizans who eminently excel in their own line, partake largely of the temperament and foibles of genius. They are often irregular in their application to business, fond of company and of its excitements; so that nothing is so common as to say, that man is an inimitable workman, but that he will not work half his

time, and is too fond of the public house, where he draws a circle of admirers around him. But when a man is, at once, skilful, steady, and enthusiastic in his art,—that man is a happy man. His mind has a constant subject of reflection, of exercise, of satisfaction before it. He sees with pride the workmanship of his hands, and enjoys with as much inward delight the reputation and applause it brings him, as the fame of a poet, a philosopher, or a conqueror does to their respeetive possessors.

But, in many others, the peculiar instinct shews itself in some other pursuit than their trade. It does not happen to them to have fallen upon that profession which would have called forth the slumbering spirit, and when it wakes it shews itself in some other form. These men are said to have their HOBBY. They have a favourite scheme, or occupation, which shares their attention with their trade, and often supersedes it. Crabbe, that close observer of whatever passed in this grade of life, has well described these propensities. If they shew themselves in a man's own trade:

> Then to the wealthy you will see denied
> Comforts and joys that with the poor abide;
> There are who labour through the year, and yet
> No more have gained than—not to be in debt;
> Who still maintain the same laborious course,
> Yet pleasure hails them from some favourite source;
> And health, amusement, children, wife, or friend,
> With life's dull views their consolations blend.

But if the bias of the mind does not lie in the man's own art:

> Nor these alone possess the lenient power
> Of soothing life in the desponding hour;

Some favourite studies, some delightful care
The mind with trouble and distresses share;
And by a coin, a flower, a verse, a boat,
The stagnant spirits have been set afloat;
They pleased at first, and then the habit grew,
Till the fond heart no higher pleasure knew.
Oft have I smiled the happy pride to see
Of humble tradesmen in their evening glee;
When of some pleasing, fancied good possessed,
Each grew alert, was busy, and was blest.
Whether the *call*-bird yield the hours delight,
Or magnified in microscope, the mite;
Or whether tumblers, croppers, carriers seize
The gentle mind, they rule it, and they please.

Yes, it is in these and many other occupations, dictated by individual organization, or taste, that numbers of the working class find a world of happiness. Some are amateurs of one kind, some of another; some are rearers of fancy pigeons, some of fancy dogs; others are enthusiasts in music, singing, bell-ringing, and make a noise in the world from bell-fries, organ-lofts, orchestras, at harmonic meetings, and in rural festivals. Some spend a whole life in seeking the perpetual motion; some in devising improvements in steam-engines, and other machines. Whether they deal with realities, or with chimeras, as too often they do, the busy spirit of humanity will be at work in the breasts of the operative class. In the country it assumes many a shape that is beautiful, and others that are picturesque. Some are incorrigible poachers, from the love of the pursuit of wild creatures, of strolling about in solitary glens and woods, of night-watching, and adventure. Others have an inextinguishable love of a gun,—these men all their lives are noted for this propensity. They

have a certain keeper-like appearance. They affect fustian or velveteen jackets, with wide skirts, and huge pockets; gaiters, and strong shoes. They have a lounging, yet unauthorized air, which betrays them to be not the true men of office. They have always some excuse for carrying a gun; they are stuffers of curious birds and animals; or they procure them for one who is; and it is alike amazing how they escape the penalties of the law for trespasses and destruction of game, and yet bring home such owls, squirrels, herons, sea-birds, curlews, plovers, martins, and fillimarts, shrikes, waxen-chatterers, and foxes, and young fawns, as are not to be obtained except by a traversing, daily and nightly, of parks, preserves, woods, and chases, as must be perilous, and indeed, impracticable to any other men. Noblemen and gentlemen generally find it desirable in the end, to install this particular variety of the human species in all the honours and freedom of keepership. Happy is the man of this stamp who reaches America. That is the land for him! A land of woods, of herds of deer, and turkeys, of bears and buffaloes. There he may roam the paradise of back settlements, and satiate his soul with hunting and shooting; with lying in wait, and with wild adventure, without fear of game-laws, and the obstructions of monopoly.

Others again, have an indomitable passion for hunting otters, badgers, polecats, rats, hedge-hogs, and similar tenants of out-of-the-way dales, river-sides, thickets and plantations; and have perpetually at their heels, terriers of every kind, spaniels, and lurchers. These are generally well entitled to be classed under the head of ragamuffins; and are generally more than

half poachers, being as ready to snap up a leveret, rabbit, or young wild-duck, as they are to destroy a stoat. But the passion for their peculiar fancy is inextinguishable, and not to be put out by a whole bench of magistrates, or a voyage to New South Wales, for there the dogs would instinctively muster at their heels, and they would be after the kangaroos at the very first opportunity.

A congener of these, and yet of a somewhat more civilised grade, is the bird-catcher and trainer. Beware of your nightingales that come in April from some sunny land, and shew you the preference of settling for the season in your shrubbery, or coppice. If this man be your neighbour, the glorious song of midnight will soon experience a mysterious hush. You hear it, and proclaim the news to your family. By day you catch its not-to-be-mistaken notes amongst the budding trees, as you pass in and out of your grounds. "There is the very same bird come to its favourite spot," you say, to delight your wife, or sister or children, who clap their hands, and run to carry the news into the housekeeper's room. "There is the fine old nightingale again in the shrubbery!" At evening on are put bonnets and hats, shawls and cloaks, and forth sallies the happy domestic group. The air is chill, for it is but April; yet the moon is rising in her sweet pensiveness, and the freshness of the air and the budding boughs are about you. Down the narrow path you go, where the primroses gleam faintly from amongst the mossy stems of the shrubbery trees. Past the rustic summer-house you go, down by the close turf of the shadowy lawn,—near to the brook that flows so subduedly in its singing murmurs that it can-

not drown a single bird-note. You have reached the little wooden bridge—and hark!—it is there sure enough! Yes, to-night, and the next, and perhaps the next, it is there,—and then it is gone. You wonder why. Can it have deserted its favourite haunt? Can it be the stormy weather? The east wind must have silenced it? No! it is moping in the cage of that villanous bird-catcher, who is intending to aggravate his crime of kidnapping this prince of air-minstrels by fetching the blackbird which sings on the top of your ash, and the thrush that flings back his notes from the distant elm. Beware of your woodlarks, and your bulfinches, if this man be your neighbour. He has an ear which recognizes in a moment the master singer, and he has a dozen arts to put in practice against his liberty. In his little house is a collection of prisoners that would make any reasonable person's heart ache. He has blackbirds that are studying artificial tunes,—marches, and waltzes—how much more apt one would think them to learn dirges and laments! But he has even poor Robin Redbreast put to school under the nightingale—bulfinches that are blinded, and then made to listen in doleful obedience to his flute or pipe. They are to be piping bulfinches of great note and value. But let us leave the melodious melancholy of his prison-house, and when we have lightened our hearts in the open air, we may muster up charity enough to do the man justice. He has, after all, no lack of kindness in his heart. He takes them captive as the Christians take negroes—to civilize them, and make them happier! His soul is in all that he does. I one day met an old man and woman in a wood. As I drew near them I

heard a strange chirping of young birds. It was a fine summer evening. "How is this," I said; "it is time for the birds to be at roost, and yet I hear young ones chirping?" "O!" said the old man—"here they are;" opening his basket, and shewing a nest-full of young canaries. "It was a fine evening," said he, "and I and my old woman thought a walk would do us good, and we thought it would do the birds good too."

The delights of angling seize upon another class. People that have not been inoculated with the true spirit, may wonder at the infatuation of anglers—but true anglers leave them very contentedly to their wondering, and follow their diversion with a keen delight. Many old men there are of this class, that have in them a world of science,—not science of the book, or of regular tuition, but the science of actual experience. Science that lives, and will die with them; except it be dropped out piece-meal, and with the gravity becoming its importance, to some young neophyte, who has won their good graces by his devotion to their beloved craft. All the mysteries of times and seasons, of baits, flies of every shape and hue; worms, gentles, beetles, compositions, or substances found by proof to possess singular charms. These are a possession which they hold with pride, and do not hold in vain. After a close day in the shop or factory, what a luxury is a fine summer evening to one of these men, following some rapid stream, or seated on a green bank, deep in grass and flowers, pulling out the spotted trout, or resolutely, but subtlely bringing some huge pike or fair grayling from his lurking place beneath the broad stump

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and spreading boughs of the alder. Or a day, a summer's day, to such a man, by the Dove, or the Wye, amid the pleasant Derbyshire hills; by Yorkshire or Northumbrian stream; by Trent or Tweed; or the banks of Yarrow; by Teith, or Leven, with the glorious hills and heaths of Scotland round him! Why, such a day to such a man, has in it a life and spirit of enjoyment to which the feelings of cities and palaces are dim. The heart of such a man,—the power and passion of deep felicity that come breathing from mountains and moorlands; from clouds that sail above, and storms blustering and growling in the wind; from all the mighty magnificence, the solitude and antiquity of nature upon him—Ebenezer Elliott only can unfold. The weight of the poor man's life —the cares of poverty—the striving of huge cities, visit him as he sits by the beautiful stream—beautiful as a dream of eternity, and translucent as the everlasting canopy of heaven above him;—they come—but he casts them off for the time, with the power of one who feels himself strong in the kindred spirit of all things around; strong in knowledge that he is a man; an immortal—a child and pupil in the world-school of the Almighty. For that day he is more than a king—he has the heart of humanity and the faith and spirit of a saint. It is not the rod, and line that floats before him—it is not the flowing water, or the captured prey that he perceives in those moments of admission to the heart of nature, so much as the law of the testimony of love and goodness written on everything around him with the pencil of Divine beauty. He is no longer the wearied and oppressed —the trodden and despised—walking in thread-bare

garments, amid men who scarcely deign to look upon him as a brother man,—but he is reassured and recognized to himself in his own soul as one of those puzzling, aspiring and mysterious existences for whom all this splendid world was built, and for whom eternity opens its expecting gates. These are magnificent speculations for a poor angling weaver, or carpenter; but Ebenezer Elliott can tell us, that they are his legitimate thoughts when he can break for an instant the bonds of this toiling age, and escape to the open fields. Let us leave him dipping his line into the waters of refreshing thought, and return to the cottage garden. There we shall see another form of that beneficently varied taste which adds so much to the poor man's pleasures.

We may look into many a cottage garden, and find it a little world of beauty and pleasant cares. Here one poor man is a lover of bees. He has stored his little sheltered garden with all sorts of flowers that bees love, or that come out early in the year for them. On the sunny side of his little domain you see his rustic shed with its row of hives; all neatly thatched, and all sending out their busy stream of honey-gatherers. There is no man of any reflection but must feel what a source of enjoyment that row of hives has been. What cares and contrivances have contributed to extend that row from the solitary swarm, purchased perhaps in the days of deeper poverty than now presses upon him. What summer-noon watchings there have been for the flight of new swarms; what hurry and ringing of pans and fire-shovels to charm them down; what recapturings and bringing back to the ancient bench, to form a new family in the little bee-state.

There is one circumstance, however, connected with the keeping of bees, which spoils the poetry of it; and that is the brimstone pit of destruction that awaits them. But there is many a poor man that loves his bees with a strong affection, and loathes to do them that grievous wrong. He levies tribute, but does not destroy. I once saw a fine instance of this feeling. A poor man, a lover and keeper of bees, heard by chance that a swarm had taken up their abode in the roof of Caverswall Nunnery, in Staffordshire; and that the abbess was intending to have them destroyed. His residence was at a distance of seven miles from the Abbey, but he instantly put his favourite volume of "Huber on Bees" in his pocket and set out. Here, being admitted to the presence of the abbess, he told his errand, and begged that she would not commit so barbarous and inhospitable an act,—that providence seemed to have directed those wonderful little creatures thither as it were, for the certainty of protection from the hearts of Christian ladies. At least he begged that she would read that book before she put her threat into execution. He soon afterwards came to me with a face of great delight, saying—"The abbess has read Huber, and she won't destroy the bees!"

Many cottagers, again, are most zealous and successful florists. This is a taste full of beauty, and possessing a high charm. To select rich and suitable soils; to sow and plant; to nurse and shade, and water; to watch the growth and expansion of flowers of great promise;—it is sufficient for the enjoyment of one spirit. The number of flowers now cultivated by florists is much increased to what it was. They

had only the polyanthus, auricula, hyacinth, carnation, tulip, and ranunculus; but the splendid dahlia, and the panzy now engross much of their attention and admiration. Others, again, are collectors and admirers of insects; and as education extends, natural history will, no doubt, receive many zealous adherents from the operative ranks. Crabbe has described both these tastes as united in one man.

There is my friend, the weaver; strong desires
Reign in his breast; 't is beauty he admires.
See! to the shady grove he wings his way,
And feels in hope the raptures of the day.
Eager he looks; and soon to his glad eyes,
From the sweet bower, by nature formed, arise
Bright troops of virgin-moths, and new-born butterflies;
Who broke that morning from their half-year's sleep,
To fly o'er flowers where they were wont to creep.

Above the sovereign oak, a sovereign skims,
The *purple Emperor*, strong in wing and limbs:
There fair *Camilla* takes her flight serene,
Adonis blue, and *Paphia* silver queen:
With every filmy fly from mead or bower,
And hungry *Sphynx*, who threads the honeyed flower;
She o'er the larkspurs' bed, where sweets abound,
Views every bell, and hums the approving sound:
Poised on her busy plumes, with feelings nice,
She draws from every flower, nor tries a floret twice.

He fears no bailiff's wrath, no baron's blame,
His is untaxed, and undisputed game;
Nor less the place of curious plants he knows;
He both his *Flora* and his *Fauna* shews.
For him is blooming in its rich array,
The glorious flower which bore the palm away.
In vain a rival tried his utmost art,
His was the prize, and joy o'erflowed his heart.
"This, this is beauty! cast, I pray, your eyes
On this my glory! see the grace—the size!

Was ever stem so tall, so stout, so strong,
Exact in breadth, in just proportion long;
These brilliant hues are all distinct and clean,
No kindred tint, no blending streaks between;
This is no shaded, run-off, pin-eyed thing,
A king of flowers, a flower for England's king!"

Lastly, the general pleasures of a garden form a grand item in the enjoyments of the poor man. To shew what these pleasures are, to what an extent they are enjoyed in some districts, even by town mechanics, and how much further they may be extended, I shall quote a portion of a paper published by me in November 1835, in Tait's Magazine.

There are, in the outskirts of Nottingham, upwards of 5000 gardens, the bulk of which are occupied by the working class. A good many there are belonging to the substantial tradesmen and wealthier inhabitants; but the great mass are those of the mechanics. These lie on various sides of the town, in expanses of many acres in a place, and many of them as much as a mile and a half distant from the centre of the town. In the winter they have rather a desolate aspect, with their naked trees and hedges, and all their little summer-houses exposed, damp-looking and forlorn; but in spring and summer, they look exceedingly well,—in spring all starred with blossoms, all thick with leaves; and their summer-houses peeping pleasantly from among them. The advantage of these gardens to the working-class of a great manufacturing town, is beyond calculation; and I believe no town in the kingdom has so many of them in proportion to its population. It were to be desired that the example of the Nottingham artizans was imitated by those of other great towns; or rather, that the taste

for them was encouraged, and in fact, created, by the example of the middle classes, and by patriotic persons laying out fields for this purpose, and letting them at a reasonable rate. A wide difference in the capability of indulging in this healthful species of recreation, must of course, depend on the species of manufacture carried on. Where steam-engines abound, and are at the foundation of all the labours of a place, as in Manchester, for instance, there you will find few gardens in the possession of the mechanics. The steam-engine is a never-resting, unweariable, unpersuadable giant and despot; and will go on thumping and setting thousands of wheels and spindles in motion; and men must stand, as it were, the slaves of its unsleeping energies. O! what was the fate of the ancient genii to the fate of our modern mechanics! What was the fate of "the slaves of the lamp," or the slaves of talismanic ring, to that of the slaves of the steam-engine! *They* could vanish and lie at rest till came the irresistible call; they could sport over ocean and desert, through the air and the clouds; they could speed into the depths of space and wander amid the inconceivable mysteries and miracles of unknown worlds, till the omnipotent spell recalled them to execute some temporary wish of their tyrant, and then return to a wide liberty. But the slave of the steam-engine must be at the beck of *his* tyrant night or day, with only such intervals as barely suffice to restore his wearied strength and faculties:—therefore you shall not see gardens flourish and summer-houses rise in the vicinity of this hurrying and tremendous power. But where it is not, or but partially predominates, there may the mechanic enjoy the real

pleasures of a garden. And how many are those pleasures!

Early in spring—as soon, in fact, as the days begin to lengthen, and the shrewd air to dry up the wintry moisture—you see them getting into their gardens, clearing away the dead stalks of last year's growth, and digging up the soil; but especially on fine days in February and March are they busy. Trees are pruned, beds are dug, walks cleaned, and all the refuse and decayed vegetation piled up in heaps; and the smoke of the fires in which it is burnt, rolling up from many a garden, and sending its pungent odour to meet you afar off. It is pleasant to see, as the season advances, how busy their occupants become; bustling there with their basses in their hands and their tools on their shoulders; wheeling in manure; and clearing out their summer-houses; and what an air of daily increasing neatness they assume, till they are one wide expanse of blossomed fruit-trees and flowering fragrance. Every garden has its summer-house; and these are of all scales and grades, from the erection of a few tub staves, with an attempt to train a pumpkin or a wild-hop over it, to substantial brick houses with glass windows, good cellars for a deposit of choice wines, a kitchen, and all necessary apparatus, and a good pump to supply them with water. Many are very picturesque rustic huts, built with great taste, and hidden by tall hedges in a perfect little paradise of lawn and shrubbery—most delightful spots to go and read in of a summer day, or to take a dinner or tea in with a pleasant party of friends. Some of these places which belong to the substantial tradespeople have cost their occupiers from

one to five hundred pounds, and the pleasure they take in them may be thence imagined; but many of the mechanics have very excellent summer-houses, and there they delight to go, and smoke a solitary pipe, as they look over the smiling face of their garden, or take a quiet stroll amongst their flowers: or to take a pipe with a friend; or to spend a Sunday afternoon, or a summer evening, with their families. The amount of enjoyment which these gardens afford to a great number of families, is not easily to be calculated—and then the health and the improved taste! You meet them coming home, having been busy for hours in the freshness of the summer morning in them, and now are carrying home a bass brimful of vegetables for the house. In the evening thitherward you see groups and families going; the key which admits to the common paths that lead between them is produced; a door is opened and closed; and you feel that they are vanished into a pure and sacred retirement, such as the mechanic of a large town could not possess without these suburban gardens. And then to think of the alehouse, the drinking, noisy, politics-bawling alehouse, where a great many of these very men would most probably be, if they had not this attraction,—to think of this, and then to see the variety of sources of a beautiful and healthful interest which they create for themselves here:—what a contrast!—what a most gratifying contrast! There are the worthy couple, sitting in the open summer-house of one garden, quietly enjoying themselves, and watching their children romping on the grass-plot, or playing about the walks; in another, a social group of friends round the tea-table, or enjoying the reward of

all their spring labours, picking strawberries fresh from the bed, or raspberries, gooseberries, and currants from the bush. In one you find a grower of fine apples, pears, or plums, or of large gooseberries; in another, a florist, with his shew of tulips, ranunculuses, hyacinths, carnations, or other choice flowers that claim all his leisure moments, and are a source of a thousand cares and interests. And of these cares and interests, the neat awning of white canvas, raised on its light frame of wood; the glasses, and screens of board and matting, to defend those precious objects from every rude attack of sun, wind, or rain—all these are sufficient testimonies; and tell of hours early and late, in the dawn of morning and the dusk of evening, when the happy man has been entranced in his zealous labours, and absorbed in a thousand delicious fancies, and speculations of perfection. Of late, the splendid dahlia and the pansy have become objects of attention; and I believe of the latter flower, till recently despised and overlooked, except in the old English cottage garden, there are now more than a hundred varieties, of such brilliance and richness of hue, and many of them of such superb expanse of corolla, as merit all the value set upon them.

This is the allotment system of the manufacturing town; to the full as desirable as that for the country, and which may be facilitated, fraught as it is with abundant physical and moral good, by philanthropic individuals to a great extent. At Nottingham, as I have observed, the taste seems to have grown up originally of itself, and then, exciting the attention of speculators, has been extended to its present growth by them. The mechanics there have not their gar-

dens at a cheap rate. They all say that they could purchase their vegetables in the market for the amount of their rental and incidental expenses; but then, they get the health and the enjoyment, and their fruit and vegetables they get so fresh.

There are, according to a personal examination made by myself, now, upwards of 5000 of these gardens, containing, as single gardens, 400 square yards each,—the general scale of a garden; though a good many are held as double, and even treble gardens. These let at from a half-penny to three half-pence per yard; but averaged at three farthings, make a rental of 1*l.* 5s. per garden, or a total of 6250*l.* Five thousand gardens of 400 yards each of clear garden ground, independent of fences and roads, give 413 acres and about a rood. Now, if we add one-fifth for fences and roads, the total quantity of land occupied is 496 acres, or we may say, in round numbers, 500 acres. Here then, 500 acres, which, at fifty shillings an acre—a good rent for ordinary purposes, would yield a rent of 1250*l.*; yield, by being converted into gardens, a rent of 6250*l.*, or a clear profit of 5000*l.*

Thus, it is evident, that any persons willing to promote the taste for gardening in the neighbourhood of towns, might double, in many instances, the ordinary rent of the land, and yet let it in gardens at half the price of these Nottingham ones. Even where land in the vicinity of a large town is very highly rented, a half-penny a yard, and ten gardens to the acre, fences and roads included, would produce 8*l.* 6s. 8d. per acre; no contemptible sum; to say nothing of the real kindness of the accommodation, and the health, pleasure, and pure taste communicated to their fellow men.

Whilst, against the increased risk of loss, and the increased trouble of the collection of rent, are to be set the value of the garden stock, fruit-trees, shrubs, and flower-roots, and the summer-houses, which enhance the value to the next tenant.

Here I close this chapter, and this department of my work,—the habits and amusements of the people. It is a subject to which I attach no common importance. The people make the majority of our race; and if they are all equally the objects of that divine care which created them, they must be equally the objects of our truest sympathies. This has not hitherto been sufficiently considered: but every day that consideration must be forced more and more upon us; and we shall be made to feel that no philosophy is good which does not include the poor in its theory; no religion is sound, which does not recognize their kinship; no legislation is wise which does not operate for their physical and intellectual benefit; and no country can be said to be truly prosperous, where the multitude is not respectable, enlightened, moral, and happy.

Let us all endeavour to hasten this period, as a living proof that Christianity is really preached to the poor; and that our knowledge has produced the most felicitous of its genuine fruits, in peopling this great nation with a race such as no nation has yet possessed; such as may eat,

> Well earned, the bread of service, yet may have
> A mounting spirit;—one that entertains
> Scorn of base action, deed dishonorable,
> Or aught unseemly. *Charles Lamb.*

CHAPTER XIII.

SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY.

Sonst stuerzte sich der Himmels-Liebe Kuss
Auf mich herab, in ernster Sabbathstille;
Da klang so ahndungsvoll des Glockentones Fuelle,
Und ein Gebet war bruenstiger Genuss:
Ein unbegreiflich holdes Sehnen
Trieb mich durch Wald und Wiesen hinzugehn,
Und unter tausend heissen Thraenen,
Fuehlt' ich mir eine Welt entstehn.

Faust.

In other days, the kiss of heavenly love descended upon me in the solemn stillness of the sabbath; then the full-toned bell sounded so fraught with mystic meaning, and a prayer was vivid enjoyment. A longing, inconceivably sweet, drove me forth to wander over wood and plain, and amid a thousand burning tears, I felt a world rise up to me. *Hayward's Translation.*

GOETHE, in his Faust, has given a very lively description of a German multitude bursting out of the city to enjoy an Easter Sunday;—mechanics, students, citizens' daughters, servant girls, townsmen, beggars, old women, ready to tell fortunes, soldiers, and amongst the rest, his hero Faust, and his friend Wagner, proceeding to enjoy a country walk. They reach a rising

ground; and Faust says—"Turn and look back from this rising ground upon the town. From forth the gloomy portal presses a motley crowd. Every one suns himself delightedly to-day. They celebrate the rising of the LORD, for they themselves have arisen: from the dark rooms of mean houses; from the bondage of mechanical drudgery; from the confinement of gables and roofs; from the stifling narrowness of streets; from the venerable gloom of churches—are they raised up to the open light of day. But look! look! how quickly the mass is scattering itself through the gardens and fields; how the river, broad and long, tosses many a merry bark upon its surface; and how this last wherry, overladen almost to sinking, moves off. Even from the farthest paths of the mountain, gay-coloured dresses glance upon us. I hear already the bustle of the village. This is the true heaven of the multitude; big and little are huzzaing joyously. Here I am a man—here I may be one."

Making allowance for the difference of national manners, this might serve for a picture of Sunday in the neighbourhood of a large town in England. Human nature is the same everywhere. The girls are looking out for sweethearts; and both mechanics and students are seeking after the best beer and the prettiest girl:

> Ein starkes Bier, ein beitzender Toback,
> Und eine Magd im Putz dass ist nun mein Geschmack.

"Strong beer, stinging tobacco, and a girl all in her best,—that is the taste for me," cries one: and so it is here and everywhere. See how the multitudes of our large manufacturing towns, and of London spend

their Sundays. They pour out into the country in all directions, but it is not to enjoy the country only. They *do* enjoy the country; but it is because it heightens their wild delight in smoking, drinking, and flirtation. Who does not know what innumerable haunts there are within five, ten, or even twenty miles round London, to which these classes repair on Sundays: tea-houses and tea-gardens, country inns, hedge-alehouses, all the old and noted places where good beer and tobacco, merry company, and noisy politics are to be found? Norwood, Greenwich, Richmond, Hampton-Court, Windsor, the Nore, Herne-Bay, Gravesend, Margate; and those old-fashioned places of resort that Hone gives you glimpses of; such as Copenhagen-House, the Sluice-House, Canonbury, etc.—what swarming votaries have they all.* And what an immensity of new regions will the railroads that are now beginning to stretch their lines from the metropolis in different directions, lay open—*terræ incognitæ*, as it were, to the millions that in the

* The following calculation, made on Whit-Monday 1835, may give some idea of the number of similar pleasure-seekers on a fine summer Sunday. On Monday, between eight in the morning and nine at night, 191 steam-vessels passed through the Pool to and from Margate, Herne-Bay, Sheerness, Southend, the Nore, Gravesend, Woolwich, and Greenwich, including several on their way to and from Scotland, Ireland, and the continent. Each vessel averaged, at least, 500 persons. The above calculation was made by Mr. Brown, a boat-builder in Wapping, who, with his servants, watched them all day. But many passed after nine, swelling the number to upwards of 200; so that more than 100,000 persons must have been afloat in the steamers on Monday, exclusive of the passengers in small boats. Several steam-vessels carried 800 and 900 souls each to the Nore and back. One steam-vessel brought back from Greenwich 1000 persons, another 1300, and a third was actually crowded with 1500 passengers.

dense and ever-growing mass of monstrous London pant after an outburst into the country. Truly may these say, through the medium of this modern and most providential means of occasional dispersion:—

To morrow to fresh fields and pastures new!

I well remember two ladies of high reputation in the literary world, who, after reading Faust, were inspired with a desire to see how the lower classes amused themselves on a Sunday in this country. It was, they thought, a subject of profitable study. They could not divest themselves of the idea that the people must wonderfully enjoy themselves, in their own way; and perhaps they might imagine that they should be received and complimented as Faust and his friend Wagner were. Well; the experiment was tried. Another gentleman and myself accompanied them; and of all schemes, we hit upon that of going by the steam-packet to Richmond. It was a fine morning in May. Our packet and another sailed from St. Katherine's wharf with crowded decks, and a bright sun over our heads, casting its animating glory upon tower and town, over the majestic river, and the green country to which, anon, we emerged. We swept under bridge after bridge, and saw the mighty metropolis, with its vast wilderness of houses, wharfs, warehouses, and great public buildings, rapidly glide away behind us; above all the towers and spires of churches, St. Paul's lifting its solemn dome and glittering cross; and then the villages, splendid villas, and beautiful gardens, with the tall robinias in their new leaves, and covered with their snow-white masses of flowers, in gay succession;—Lambeth, Vauxhall,

Chelsea, Battersea, Fulham, Putney, Barnes, Chiswick, Kew, Richmond!—it was a fair and promising scene.

The people on board were well-dressed. There were some portly, middle-aged dames, with gold watches at their sides, and clad in richest silks; and there were some as lovely young ones as London could shew. You were sure that there were plenty of the very-well-to-do-in-the-world about you, if there were none of the very refined; substantial tradespeople, that would have the best the world could procure in eating, drinking, and dressing. And there was a knot of Germans too; men with great mustachios and laced coats; and damsels from whose tongues the strong, homely, expressive German speech seemed to fall wondrous softly. It was quite an attractive circumstance: for our fair friends, being just in the fresh fervour of studying "Die Deutche Sprache," and reading Faust, imagined everything in them interesting, and doubtless fancied them just such characters as Goethe would have drawn much out of. All seemed promising, when lo! we were at Richmond, and every thing had been only orderly, cheerful, and nothing more!

Ah well! this was English decorum on a Sunday; if it were not very piquant, it was at least, very commendable. We stepped on shore, lunched, strolled about on the terrace, amid streams of gay people; sat on one of the seats, and gazed over that vast expanse of rich woodland, meads, and villas; wandered down the green meadows towards Petersham and Twickenham, into the woods below the Star-and-Garter, and back to the packet. And now we were destined to see the character of the common people on

a Sunday jaunt. The moment the packet began to move, it began to rain, and all the way it rained! rained! rained! The ladies took refuge in the cabin. What a cabin! There were all the sober, orderly throng of the morning, metamorphosed by the power of strong drink into a rackety, roaring, drinking, smoking, insolent, and jammed-together crew. The cabin was crushing full. The stairs were densely packed with people. One of the ladies made a precipitate retreat upon deck, and there, with only the protection of her parasol, stood with the patience of a martyr and the temper of a saint, all the weary length of the voyage, through dripping, drenching, never-ceasing rain! The other, with more fear of her silks and satins, and determined to see what such a crowd *was*, persisted in staying below. It was an act which only the highest heroism could have maintained. There was a group taking tea at a side-table, all well, very well-dressed people, and holding a conversation of such language! such sentiments! such anecdotes! and accompanied with such bursts of laughter! at what must have stricken people with any sense of decency, dumb! And then there were those spruce youths, so modest in the morning, now drinking pots of porter and smoking cigars. Yes, smoking cigars, though the laws of the cabin, blazoned aloft, proclaimed—"No smoking allowed in the cabin!"—Spite of all cabin, or cabinet, or parliamentary laws, they drank, they smoked, they rolled voluminous clouds from one to another; and when requested to desist, said—"O, certainly! It is perfectly insufferable for people to smoke in such company; they ought to be turned out." And then all laughed together at their

own wit. The captain was called, and begged to enforce his own law; and they cried, "O yes, captain! certainly, certainly," and then laughed again; and the captain smiled, and withdrew: for what captain could seriously forbid smoke and drink that were purchased of himself?

These drapers' apprentices, and shopmen, for such they seemed, gloried in annoying the whole company; and for this purpose, they placed themselves by the open window, so that the draft carried the smoke across all the place. There did but prove to be one real gentleman in the whole troop, who accommodated the lady with a seat—for not a soul besides would stir—and said, as he saw her annoyance; for with all her endurance, this was visible—"Madam, what a hell we have got into!"

And such, thought I, is a specimen of the populace of the mighty and enlightened London! Truly the schoolmaster has work enough yet before him.

> It was a party in a parlour,
> Crammed just as they on land are crammed;
> Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
> All noisy, and all damned!

Our fair friends wished to see the character of the common people in their Sunday recreations, and they saw here a specimen that, I feel persuaded, will satisfy them for life. One, at least, saw this; for the other stood stoically silent upon deck, and saw nothing but rain! rain! rain! O the weary time of that voyage! amid oaths and clamour, vulgarity in all its shapes of swaggering, or maudlin foolishness, riot of action, and indecorum of speech, drinking, smoking, crushing, laughing, swearing,—a confusion carried along the

fair Thames, and into the heart of London, worse than that of Babel, and worthy of Pandemonium. How many thousands of such Sunday revellers, steeped in drink, and roystering vulgarity, were pouring into that mighty heart of civilization and Christian knowledge, at the moment we joyfully skipped up Blackfriars stairs, and thanked heaven that the Goethe experiment was over.

What London exhibits on its own great scale, all our populous manufacturing towns exhibit, each in its own degree. It is curious to observe from the earliest hour of a Sunday morning, in fine weather, what groups are pouring out into the country. There are mechanics that, in their shops and factories,—while they have been caged up by their imperious necessities during the week, and have only obtained thence sights of the clear blue sky above, of the green fields laughing far away, or have only caught the wafting of a refreshing gale on their fevered cheek as they hurried homeward to a hasty meal, or back again to the incarceration of Mammon,—have had their souls inflamed with desires for breaking away into the free country. These have been planning, day after day, whither they shall go on Sunday. To what distant village; to what object of attraction. There have come visions of a neat country ale-house to them; its clean hearth, sanded floor; its capital ale, and aromatic pipe after a long walk; its pure unadulterated fare, sweet bread, savoury rashers of bacon, beef steaks and onions, and all with most mouth-watering odours. Others have seen clear hurrying trout-streams, or deep still fish-ponds, lying all along wild moors, or amid tangled woods; and they have determined to

be with them. They will take angle and net; they will strip off clothes, and take the trout with their hands, from under the grassy banks of their little swift streams. They will have a dash at the squire's carp, when he and all his people are at church. And, in other seasons, mushroom gathering, and nutting, and all kinds of what is called sabbath-breaking, come before them with an unconquerable impetus. For to their minds—neglected, but full of strong desires and pent-up energies—nature's delights, wild pursuits, bodily refreshments, and the enjoyment of one day's full freedom from towns, red walls, dry pavements, shops, masters, and even wives and children, are mixed up into a strange, but wonderfully bewitching excitement. These are going off, before the world in general is awake, at four, five, or six o'clock in a morning, in clusters of twos and threes, sixes and sevens, with long and eager strides, stout sticks in their hands, and faces set towards the country with a determined expression of fresh-air hungriness. And there, again, are going the bird-catchers; two or three of them, with two or three children with them, perhaps. They have some far-off green lane, or furzy common, or airy down in their mind, to which they are hastening with their cages, carried under a piece of green baize, or blinded with a handkerchief. All the way will they stalk on at a four-mile rate, and these little lads—the least not more than five years old,—will go on trotting after them, and never think of weariness till all the sport is over, and they are making their way homeward in the evening. Then shall you see them dragged along by one of their father's hands; for the men will not slacken pace for

them, but pull them along with them; and you will see those little legs go on, trot, trot, trot, till you think they will actually be worn to the stumps before they reach home. These men and eager lads you will find in some solitary spot seven or eight miles off, if you go out so far, seated silently under a tall hedge or old tree, or in some moorland thicket, watching their apparatus, which is placed at a distance; their tame bird, of the species they are seeking to take, chained by its leg to a crossed stick, or a bough thrust into the ground. There it is, hopping about and chirping in the sunshine; and around stand cages containing other decoy birds, and other cages ready to receive the unsuspicious birds, that, attracted by the hopping and chirping of their captive kinsmen, will presently come and alight near them, and speedily get entangled in the limed twigs that are disposed about, or will find the net that is ready spread for them, come swoop over them. Every person who has walked the streets of London, has seen the crowds of these little captives, larks, woodlarks, linnets, goldfinches, nightingales, etc., in the shops, which have been thus caught on all the great heaths and downs, for twenty miles round the metropolis, by fowlers, who are nearly always thus employed there.

Then, again, you see another Sunday class; tradesmen, shopkeepers, and their assistants and apprentices —all those who have friends in the country,—on horseback or in gigs, driving off to spend the day with those that come occasionally and pay them a visit at markets and fairs. The faces of these are set for farm and other country houses within twenty miles round. There is not a horse or gig to be had for

love or money at any of the livery-stables on a Sunday. These hebdomadal rusticators, — these good dinner-eaters, fruit-devourers, curd-and-cream-consumers, pipe-smokers, and loungers in gardens, garden-arbours, crofts, orchards—these *soi-disant* judges of cattle, crops, dogs, guns, game,—these haunters of country-houses, complimenters of country beauties, and lovers of good country fare,—have got them all. Yes, yes, many a pleasant Sunday in the country do these men spend after their fashion, — none of the worst, if none of the holiest; and yet they go to the village church too sometimes, and wonder that so fine a preacher should be hidden in such a place. Towards nine or ten o'clock in the evening, they will be pouring back into the town as blithely as they rolled out in the morning, being now primed with all those good things that lured them away so sharply after breakfast.

And, when they were gone, how sunnily and cheerily passed the day in the town; the merry bells all ringing, the gay people all abroad, streaming along the smooth pavements to church or chapel, or for the forenoon and evening promenade, in their fresh and handsome attire. Such troops of lovely women, such counterpoising numbers of goodly and well-dressed men: all squalor, and poverty, and trouble, and distress shrunk backward into the alleys and dens out of sight; all cares and tradesmanship shut up in the closed shops and warehouses; and nothing but ease, leisure, bravery of equipment, and shew of wealth, walking in the face of the sun, as if there was no reason why they should not walk there for ever. The very beggars are gone, like swallows in autumn

—not one to be seen, except in the secret rendezvous where they pass one long day of luxurious idleness. The barrack has sent forth its troop of soldiers in their rich full-dress. They have marched with sounding music to the great church, with their usual crowd of boys and idle men after them. And then, morning, noon, or evening, you have seen a group of people collect in the market-place, or some open street, that has grown and grown into a large, dense crowd: and then you have seen a man suddenly appear, with bare head, and book in hand, in the centre. This is some field-preacher; one of many hundreds that on this day, in towns, villages, rural lanes, or on heaths and commons, go out to preach to them who are too indifferent, or too shabby, to come into a respectable place of worship.

We often think how strange it would have been to have lived in the days of the Reformation, or of the Puritans, when men full of zeal went to and fro, through the length and breadth of the land, to denounce the dominant form of religion, and preach repentance and salvation from the Bible. We have not the opposition and the persecution now, or we should have just such men and such scenes. There is such freedom for every man to choose his own mode of worship, and the religiously inclined have so many modes to choose from, and to associate them with a circle of people so much after their own hearts, that they have no impulse to seek further; no, not to seek after those who have no particular desire to be found; they think it enough that they have chapel-room and open doors for those who will come. It is chiefly, therefore, the poor that are left to seek after

the poor; that feel it incumbent to "go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." The mechanic, who has been labouring hard all the week in his worldly vocation, now shaves and washes, and dresses the best he may, and goes forth, fearing not the sneers and the scorn of the great and learned, of the worldly-wise and genteel, but comes into the very face of them, and before their gay windows in the open square; often before the lofty church and majestic cathedral, whose organ-tones are deeply pealing in his ears. There he lifts up his homely features, his rudely clipped head; there he lifts up his horny hand that has for many a year dealt sturdy strokes to inanimate matter, and now deals, with tenfold zeal, strokes as hard to hearts as hard. There he lifts up his voice in no finely modulated or practised tones, but with earnest pleadings and awful threatenings, and unfoldings of God's judgments on the wicked and careless; and then, with as earnest and affectionate expositions of his mercies, arrests, terrifies, melts, and fills with new sensations and desires the hearts of his fellows in the lowest regions of human life, who have lived beyond the sound of heavenly promises, and of God's love and fear, in a great measure, "because no one cared for their souls."

The wise may wonder; the learned may curl the lip of classical pride; the gay and the happy, who live in splendid houses, and worship in splendid pews and beneath high and arched roofs, may pass by, and not even glance on the poor illiterate preacher and his spell-bound audience; but that man is, after all, a patriot and a scholar; a good subject of the realm—a

good servant of heaven; and will probably effect more real benefit in one day, than a dozen of us, who think sufficiently well of our services to the commonwealth, shall effect in all our lives: and till some comprehensive plan is adopted, by which the Sabbath may lay all its advantages, all its holy peace, all its knowledge and heavenly fruition, before every man, woman and child, in this great empire, he must and shall do what he can to supply the deficiency. With all his ignorance,—and he has much,—he has learned what is necessary for the good of his own spirit, and the strength of natural sympathy has taught him the way to communicate it to the hearts of his fellows. He knows the language, the style, the tone of sentiment, and the species of argument that the soonest reaches them. He knows their besetments and their wants, for he has been pursued by the same needs, tainted by the same corruptions, baptized into the same distresses; he has an experimental knowledge that no man of another class can have. With all his extravagance,—and he has much,—he has not half the amount that we daily see in more dignified places; and for the wildness, the error, the eccentricity of his doctrines, ah! how much more readily could we match them in those after whom carriages roll, and the world runs, and on whom honours and wealth are heaped as an inadequate reward. See there, how he extends his arms! how he beats the air! how he strains every muscle, and exerts every fibre of his frame, till the perspiration rolls from his heated brow; how he thunders, and makes the whole great area ring with the outbreak of his terrors, his adjurations, and his appeals! And yet, from the simple table on which he

is mounted shall no folly proceed, that has not its counterpart in the most dignified pulpit, wholly freed —and that is a world of advantage—from the freezing indifference that fills thousands with its torpidity.

For the seamen, London and Liverpool, and other ports, offer their floating or seamen's chapels, where they may hear the gospel preached in a language that goes straight to their hearts and understandings, but which a landsman would attempt in vain. Like the lower orders in general, they have a language and an experience of their own, and the man who preaches to them in another language, and with other imagery, cannot keep alive their attention, however eloquent, or however learned; and he who attempts their language without a practical knowledge of their life, only excites their ridicule. It is even necessary, occasionally, to accommodate the language of scripture to their ideas and experience. A very popular preacher once requested permission to address the sailors in their floating chapel at Liverpool, and, attempting seamen's language, told them that, he who secured an interest in Christ, cast anchor on a rock! At once all eyebrows were elevated in amazement, and broad grins overspread every face. "Hear him! Hear him!" they cried, one to another, "he talks of casting anchor *on a rock!*" Yet was there no uncommon hardness, or propensity to scoffing in these men; on the contrary, it was admirable to see, when Captain Scoresby, the well-known northern voyager, addressed them, how they kindled with interest, and melted down in emotion; when he told them how Christ preached in a ship, how he loved the mariners of his days, the tears started from their eyes, and

rolled over scores of hardy cheeks that had faced the fiercest gales, and been tanned by the hottest suns. It was, and is still, I doubt not, delightful to see such an audience. There was the smart sailor and his smart lass; others with their wives and families; and old men who had spent the greatest portion of a long life on the seas. Such a collection of black and curly heads, of bushy whiskers, of the thin and white hair of age, of eyes gleaming with youth and life, or dimmed by the extremity of years!—such an intent and childlike throng of listeners! all so little accustomed to artifice,—to conceal or feel shame for their emotions,—that the changes of their expressions were as rapid and striking as those of the sun and wind on their own element. There sate some happy fathers, with their children on their knees, as though they saw so little of them, had found them so lately, or must leave them so soon, that they could not have them near enough. There sate strong men, touched to the depth of their hearts by the pathos of the preacher, leaning against the side of the cabin, and weeping unrestrained tears, or listening, with lips apart, in breathless attention; and there sate women, who, when winds and tempests were mentioned, turned a fond, anxious look to some dear one sitting by them; and others, who, when the voyagers at sea were prayed for, clasped their hands, and looked to heaven unutterable things. Great must be the comfort and the blessing of thus bringing Christianity to the knowledge of our seafaring men. Great has been its effect amongst the fishermen of Cornwall, as any one may see, who will visit the crowded chapels of St. Ives, and other places.

But there is still another class of preachers that may be encountered on Sundays: the disciples of Irving. None of your simple mechanics, but gentlemen —gentlemen in appearance, in manners, in education. You will see such a one pulling out his pocket Bible, in some public situation, and beginning to address the two or three that happen to stand near. The singularity of the thing soon attracts others; there begins to be a moving from all parts towards that spot, till there is, at length, a large and dense crowd. There, in the midst of this wondering and promiscuous circle, in the most cultivated tones, with the most proper action, and in the purest language, you hear, perhaps, the Honourable and Reverend —— himself, "dealing damnation round the land;" depicting his audience in the most fearful colours, as fallen, utterly corrupt, blackened with every imaginable sin, and wandering blindfold on the very brink of hell. In the opinion of some of these preachers, all the world is lying in ignorance and sin; all other preachers of all other creeds are blind leaders of the blind; to him and his few coadjutors alone has the mystery of godliness been revealed; "they are the men, and wisdom shall die with them." I must confess that, to me, this cold Calvinism, this abusive and declamatory zeal, though coming from very gentlemanly mouths, is not a thousandth part so attractive as the warm-hearted, liberal, and affectionate addresses of the illiterate mechanic. Nay, to me it is excessively repulsive; and I would much rather find myself in some far-off village, in some green lane, or on the heath, where such are holding their summer camp-meeting. There at least, are warmth and enthusiasm; there at least, if there be

extravagance, is also an exhibition of much character, and plenty of the picturesque. A crowd of rustic people is assembled; a wagon is drawn thither for a stage, and in it stand men with black skull-caps, or coloured handkerchiefs tied upon their heads to prevent taking cold after their violent exertions; men of those grave and massy, or thin, worn, and sharp features, that tell of strong, rude intellects, or active and consuming spirits; men, in whose bright, quick eyes, or still, deep gaze, from beneath shaggy brows, you read passions that will lighten, or a shrewdness that will tell with strong effect. In their addresses you are continually catching the most picturesque expressions, the most unlooked-for illustrations,—often the most irresistibly amusing. I heard one edifying his audience with an account of the apples of the Dead Sea, gathered most likely, at a tenth transmission, from Adam Clarke's Commentaries. "Ay," said he, "sin is fair to look at, but foul to taste. It is like those apples that grow by the *Red* Sea. They are yellow as gold on one side, and rosy-cheeked as a fair maid of a morning on the other; but bite them,—yes, I say bite them, and they are full of pepper and mustard!"

Another was talking of God's goodness, and applying Christ's illustration: "'If you ask your father for bread, will he give you a stone?' Now, my brethren I don't mean a stone of bread,—Christ didn't mean a stone of bread: for, may be, it was not sold by the stone in his time; and he would not be a bad father neither, that gave you a stone of bread at a time; but I mean a stone from the road,—a real pebble, as cold as charity, as bare as the back of my hand, and as hard as the heart of a sinner."

Now, none but those who had known the immense value of a stone of bread, would be likely to think of such a thing, or to guard against such a mistake. But with such laughable errors, with much ignorance and outrageous cant, there is often mixed up a rude intellectual strength, and a freshness of thought that never knew the process of taming and trammelling called education, and that fears no criticism; and flashes of poetical light, that please the more for the rudeness of their accompaniment. There are women, too, that exhort in soft voices and pathetic tones on such occasions; and, suddenly the crowd will divide itself into several companies, and go singing to different parts of the field. Their hymns have a wild vivacity, a metaphoric boldness, and, strange as it may seem, a greater spirituality about them than those of any other English sect that I have come in contact with. It is well known that they are set to some of the finest and liveliest, and most touching song-tunes; and hence, perhaps partly their startling effect; having divested themselves of that dry and dolorous monotony that hangs about sectarian hymns in general. They describe the Christian life under the figure of battles and campaigns, with "Christ, their conquering captain" at their head; as pilgrimages, and night-watches; and hence their addresses are full of the most vivid imagery. I well remember, in the dusk of a fine summer evening, the moon hanging in the far western sky, the dark leaves of the brook-side alders rustling in the twilight air, hearing, from the dim heath where they were holding their camp-meetings, the wild sound of one of these hymns. It was the dialogue of a spirit questioning and answering itself in the passage of death, and the

entrance into the happy land, and the chorused words of "All is well!—All is well!" came over the shadowy waste with an unearthly effect.

Singing then, such hymns,—but on these occasions chiefly of supplication or triumph,—they kneel down, each company in a circle; the leaders pray; and it is curious to see what looks of holy jealousy are cast from one circle to another, as the voice of one leader predominates over those of the others by its vehemence, its loudness, or its eloquence; drawing speedily away all the audience of the less gifted. It is scarcely now to be expected that we shall ever find a Whitfield, a Wesley, a Fox, or a Bunyan, on such an occasion, but from the effect of the enthusiasm, the earnestness, the wild energy and rude eloquence, that I *have* seen in a few humble men, I can well imagine, with Lord Byron, what must be the impression made by one strong mind under the broad blue sky, and amid the accompanying picturesqueness of scene and people.

But let us away into the far, far country! Into the still, pure, unadulterated country. Ah! here indeed is a sabbath! What a sunny peace, what a calm yet glad repose lies on its fair hills; over all its solemn woods! How its flowery dales, and deep, secluded valleys reflect the holy tranquillity of heaven! It is morning; and the sun comes up the sky as if he knew it was a day of universal pause in the workings of the world; he shines over the glittering dews, and green leaves, and ten thousand blossoms; and the birds fill the blue fresh air with a rapture of music. The earth looks new and beautiful as on the day of its creation; but it is as full of rest as if it drew near

to its close—all its revolutions past, all its turbulence hushed, all its mighty griefs healed, its mysterious destinies accomplished; and the light of eternity about to break over it with a new and imperishable power. Man rests from his labours, and everything rests with him. There lie the weary steeds that have dragged the chain, and smarted under the lash—that have pulled the plough and the ponderous wagon, or flown over hill and dale at man's bidding; there they lie, on the slope of the sunny field; and the very sheep and cattle seem imbued with their luxurious enjoyment of rest. The farmer has been walking into his fields, looking over this gate and that fence, into inclosures of grass, mottled with flowers like a carpet, or rich green corn growing almost visibly; at his cattle and his flock; and now he comes back with leisurely steps, and enters the shady quiet of his house. And it *is* a shady quiet. The sun glances about its porch, and flickers amongst the leaves on the wall, and the sparrows chirp, and fly to and fro; but the dog lies and slumbers on the step of the door, or only raises his head to snap at the flies that molest him. The very cat, coiled up on a sun-bright border in the garden, sleeps voluptuously:—within, all is cleanness and rest. There is none of the running and racketting of the busy week-day: the pressing of curds, and shaping and turning of cheese; the rolling of the barrel-churn; the scouring of pails; the pumping, and slopping, and working, and chattering, and singing, and scolding, of dairy-maids. All that can be dispensed with of these matters, is dispensed with, and what must be done is done quietly, and is early away. There is a clean, cool parlour; the open

window lets in the odour of the garden—the yet cool and delicious odour, and the hum of bees. Flowers stand in their pots in the window; gathered flowers stand on the breakfast table; and the farmer's comely wife, already dressed for the day, as she sees him come in, sits down to pour out his coffee. Over the croft-gate the labourers are leaning, talking of the last week's achievements, and those of the week to come; and in many a cottage garden the cottagers, with their wives and children, are wandering up and down, admiring the growth of this and that; and every one settles in his own mind, that his cabbages, and peas, and beans are the best in the whole country; and that, as for currants, gooseberries, apricots, and strawberries, there never were such crops since trees and bushes grew.

But the bells ring out from the old church tower. The pastor is already issuing from his pleasant parsonage; groups of peasantry are already seen streaming over the uplands towards the village. In the lanes, gay ribbons and Sunday-gowns glance from between the trees, and every house sends forth its inhabitants to worship. Blessings on those old grey fabrics, that stand on many a hill, and in many a lowly hollow, all over this beloved country; for much as we reprobate that system of private, or political patronage by which unqualified, unholy, and unchristian men have sometimes been thrust into their ancient pulpits, I am of Sir Walter Scott's opinion, that no places are so congenial to the holy simplicity of Christian worship as they are. They have an air of antiquity about them—a shaded sanctity, and stand so venerably amid the most English scenes, and the tombs of

generations of the dead, that we cannot enter them without having our imaginations and our hearts powerfully impressed with every feeling and thought that can make us love our country, and yet feel that it is not our abiding place. Those antique arches, those low massy doors, were raised in days that are long gone by; around those walls, nay, beneath our very feet, sleep those, who in their generations, helped, each in his little sphere, to build up England to her present pitch of greatness. We catch glimpses of that deep veneration, of that unambitious simplicity of mind and manner that we would fain hold fast amid our growing knowledge, and its inevitable remodelling of the whole frame-work of society. We are made to feel earnestly the desire to pluck the spirit of faith, the integrity of character, and the whole heart of love to kin and country, out of the ignorance and blind subjection of the past. Therefore is it that I have always loved the village church, that I have delighted to stroll far through the summer fields; and hear still onward its bells ringing happily, to enter and sit down amongst its rustic congregation,—better pleased with their murmur of responses, and their artless but earnest chant, than with all the splendour and parade of more lofty fabrics. Therefore is it that I long to see the people rescued from the thraldom of aristocratic patronage, that they may select at their own will, the pious and pure hearted to fill every pulpit in the land, and station in every parish a lover of God, a lover of the country, and a lover of the poor.

But Sunday morning is past: the afternoon is rolling away; but it shall not roll away without its dower of happiness shed on every down, and into every beauti-

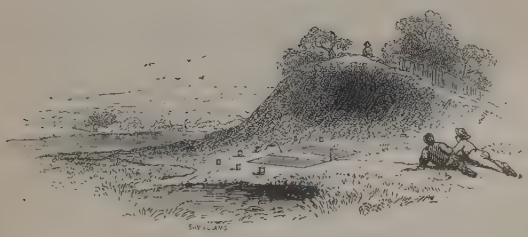
ful vale of this fair kingdom. Closed are the doors of the church, but opened are those of thousands and tens of thousands of dwellings to receive friends and kindred. And around the pleasant tea-table, happy groups are gathering in each other's houses, freed from the clinging, pressing, enslaving cares of the six days; and sweetly, and full of renewing strength to the heart does the evening there roll away. And does it not roll as sweetly where, by many a cottage-door, the aged grandfather and grandmother sit with two generations about them, and bask in another glorious Sabbath sunset? And is it not sweet where friends stroll through the delicious fields, in high or cheerful talk; along the green lane, or broom-engoldened hill-side; or down into the woodland valley, where the waters run clear and chimingly, amid the dipping grass and the brooklime; and the yellow beams of the descending sun glance serenely amongst the trees? And is it not sweet, where, on some sequestered stile, sit two happy lovers, or where they stray along some twilight path, and the woodbine and the wild-rose are drooping their flowery boughs over them, while earth and heaven, supremely lovely in themselves, take new and divine hues from their own passionate spirits; and youth and truth are theirs: the present is theirs in love, the future is theirs in high confidence: all that makes glorious the life of angels is theirs for the time? Yes! all through the breadth of this great land,—through its cities, its villages, its fair fields, its liberated millions are walking in the eye of heaven, drinking in its sublime calm, refreshed by its gales, soothed by the peaceful beauty of the earth. There is a pause of profound, holy tranquillity,

in which twilight drops down upon innumerable roofs, and prayers ascend from countless hearths in city and in field, on heath and mountain,—and then, 'tis gone; and the Sabbath is ended.

But blessings, and ten thousand blessings be upon that day; and let myriads of thanks stream up to the throne of God, for this divine and regenerating gift to man. As I have sate in some flowery dale, with the sweetness of May around me, on a week-day, I have thought of all the millions of immortal creatures toiling for their daily life in factories and shops, amid the whirl of machinery and the greedy cravings of mercantile gain, and suddenly this golden interval of time has lain before me in all its brightness,—a time, and a perpetually recurring time, in which the iron grasp of earthly tyranny is loosed, and Peace, Faith, and Freedom, the angels of God, come down and walk once more amongst men!

Ten thousand blessings on this day, the friend of man and beast. The bigot would rob it of its healthful freedom, on the one hand, and coop man up in his work-a-day dungeons, and cause him to walk with downcast eyes and demure steps; and the libertine would desecrate all its sober decorum on the other. God, and the sound heart and sterling sense of Englishmen, preserve it from both these evils! Let us still avoid Puritan rigidity, and French dissipation. Let our children and our servants, and those who toil for us in vaults, and shops, and factories, between the intervals of solemn worship have freedom to walk in the face of heaven and the beauty of earth, for in the great temple of nature stand together, Health and Piety. For myself, I speak from experience, it has

always been my delight to go out on a Sunday, and like Isaac, meditate in the fields, and, especially, in the sweet tranquillity and amid the gathering shadows of evening; and never in temple or in closet, did more hallowed influences fall upon my heart. With the twilight and the hush of earth, a tenderness has stolen upon me; a desire for everything pure and holy; a love for every creature on which God has stamped the wonder of his handiwork; but especially for every child of humanity; and then have I been made to feel that there is no Oratory like that which has heaven itself for its roof, and no teaching like the teaching of the SPIRIT which created, and still overshadows the world with its infinite wings.



CHAPTER XIV.

CHEAP PLEASURES OF COUNTRY LIFE.

To the real lover of the country there needs no great events, no exciting circumstances to effect his happiness. The freshness of the country and the profoundness of its quiet, are to him full of happiness. The whole round of the seasons, the passage of every day, the still walk amongst fields and woods, and by running waters, are to him sources of perpetual pleasures. When "the winter is over and gone," he sees with joy the increased light amongst the breaking clouds and dispersing fogs; he feels with delight the milder temperature; he passes by, and observes the first bursting from the warm southern banks of green, luxuriant plants,—the arum, the mercury, the crisp chervil, the wrinkled leaves of the primrose, the blossomed branch of the apricot and peach on the sunny walls of the cottage, and the almond in the garden and shrubbery, like a tree of rosy sunshine, ere a leaf is yet seen; these things he sees with a feeling that has more true delight in it than ever was known to city drawing-room or palace. To me, the most ordinary

walk in the country is, and always has been a luxury. I remember what joy these things gave me when a boy, and now they give me again a boy's heart. I remember the enjoyment I experienced when an old sportsman used to take his gun on his arm on a Saturday afternoon, when my village school made holiday, and led me up long lanes between high mossy banks, where the little runnels come rushing and chiming along, between high, over-hanging hedges; and through wide, still, shady woods; and across fields deep with greenest grass, and bright with sunshine, and all the glory of spring; and everywhere pointed out to me the nests of birds, each built in its peculiar situation; the robin and the yellow-hammer on the bank; blackbirds and throstles in the hedges, or under the roots of some old tree overhanging a stream, or set amongst the boughs of the young fir-trees in the plantations. I remember how I used to delight in the depth of rich grass and flowery weeds in the open fields and along the sunshiny hedges; in the hedges themselves, all clad in their young leaves, sprinkled with glittering morning dews, and perhaps waving with the utmost prodigality of hawthorn bloom. I remember too, with what earnest delight I used to gaze on the bushes of the wild-rose briar, and admire the singular beauty of its finely-cut and emerald-green leaves, amongst which the whitethroat framed its gauzy nest. All this I remember: and while I think of it, I seem to hear the lark singing in the clear air above me, as he used to do, with a

> Joy we never can come near:

and I now see more clearly what it was that produced such an effect upon me. It was that beauty, that

wide-spreading, cheering, heart-strengthening beauty —which God hath showered on the face of the earth, to make us feel his presence in his works; and to learn to love him as we go along the most solitary paths, and to rejoice in his goodness, where the world comes not between us and the perception of it. It was that beauty, which is indeed a revelation from heaven, that then made itself felt in my young heart, and has only grown more dear to me every year and every day, and, I trust, has not been wanting of all that good effect which it is intended it should produce, by weaning us from worldly pleasures, by bringing us to feel habitually the presence of love, and providence, and divine purity, as we go along in solitude and thought; in short, in keeping alive in our hearts the freshness of their feelings and the strength of their better hopes. All this I remember, and it is like the light of a perpetual summer morning in the far-off horizon of memory; and I say, all these delicious feelings have gone with me through life, and do, and will, go with all those who love nature with a filial love.

The first glimpses of spring have in our eyes and hearts an indescribable charm. There is a freshness and a mellowness in the earth then, after the frosts and rains of winter, that give a beauty to it that it possesses at no other period of the year. I never see it, and smell the odour of the upturned soil, without seeming to feel renewed our ancient kinship with the earth whence we sprung, which gives us such manifold blessings all our natural lives, and takes us to its peaceful bosom when we lie down wearied, wasted, and heart-worn. When the labourer cuts his ditches,

and piles up his banks anew, there is a beauty in the dark, clear, smooth earth which his spade cleaves so shiningly. As the children of the village hunt over the steep banks for violets or snail-shells, or the early robin's nest, your eye is made conscious of the beauty of those banks, with their crumbling mould and springing plants. As the drainer cuts his drain in the greensward of the meadows; as the ploughman turns up the broad lea, all is rich and beautiful. And then, as the hedges and trees clothe themselves in their new and delicate foliage; as the winds come singing sonorously; as the grass and flowers spring beneath your feet; as April now smiles out joyously and bright, and now broods still and beneficent, with a gloom in its sky so unlike the gloom of autumn or winter—a gloom casting a dark shade on the distant landscape, while, in other quarters, the light comes bursting and gushing through the thinner places of the clouds; and fields lie hushed amid light mists, and scattered with a silvery dew in such a living, prolific greenness, that you feel that the birth of millions of flowers is rapidly maturing; that violets *must* be springing in legions along the hedges and in the copses; and that the old, yellow English daffodil is nodding in tufts in village crofts, and over the margins of mossy wells.

At such times, so deeply do we feel the entrancing influence of spring, that we cannot help breaking out into an affectionate apostrophe in praise of her:

> All sadness from my heart is gone—
> All sadness, and all fears,
> Till I forget that thou art one
> Who metest out our years.

And then, when May comes in, and we walk abroad some fine, sunshiny, breezy, yet balmy day,—balmy in hollows and dells, and along southern uplands; fresh blowing on the ridges of the downs—breezy in the forest glades; and hear the ringing notes of the blackbird and thrush, and the lark calling to high heaven itself in uncontrolable joy; and see peasants out in fields and gardens; women, from the lady of the hall to the dame of the cottage, drawn out to be genial lookers-on, and directors in the renewal of flower-borders, in the sowing of seeds and planting of shrubs; and see old men sitting on stone or wooden benches on the warm side of the house, or leading some little child by the hand down the lane,—two links come strangely together, from the extremities of the chain of human life; one not having yet arrived at the troubles of humanity, the other past them, yet what a wide, dark care-land lying between them!—to see groups of children scattered here and there over the happy fields, tracing the hedge-sides, or the clear streams, or running to secure the first cowslips, while their clear voices come ringing from the distant steeps and hill-tops, why—there is happiness to the nature-loving and man-loving spirit that is as far beyond the power of human expression, as God's goodness is beyond mortal comprehension.

There is a season of early spring marked by a succession of flowers that has something in it to me more tenderly poetical than any other part of the year. It is that between the appearance of the snowdrop and the cowslip, with all the intermediate links of the crocus, the violet, the primrose, the anemone, and the blue-bell. They have, in themselves, such delicate

grace, and are surrounded in our minds by so many poetical associations, and they mark the fleet passing of a period of so much anticipation, that they are seen with a delight at their re-appearance, and a regret that they must so soon be gone by. Then too, they have the world almost all to themselves. They are the few beloved children of the early time. All their more gorgeous and joyous kindred are still slumbering in the earth. They come forth and salute us amid the naked landscape, amid wild, chill winds and beating rain. When the cowslip disappears it is no longer so; all is greenness and sunshine; a thousand blossoms hang on the forest bough, or flutter on the earth; and the delicacy of our perceptions is lost in the profusion of beauty.

But then, in that calmer season, when May has put on all its wealth and splendour; when the fields are deep with grass, and golden and purple with flowers; when the hawthorn is a miracle of beauty and sweetness, perfuming the whole air, what paradises of delight are gardens, warm, flowery, odorous,—happy with the hum of bees: and old orchards, where you may witness what Coleridge so feelingly describes in a noble blank-verse letter to his brother:—

> As now, on some delicious eve,
> We in our sweet sequestered orchard-plot
> Sit on the tree crooked earth-ward; whose old boughs,
> That hang above us in an arborous roof,
> Stirred by the faint gale of departing May,
> Send their loose blossoms slanting o'er our heads!

And thus it is through every season. In June and July, the glow and perpetual beauty of the country; the abundance of grass and flowers; the charm of

river sides, of angling in woodland streams; the magnificence of thunder-storms; the breaking out of coolness and freshness after them; the delights of running waters; bathing and sailing; the fragrance of fields and gardens; the beauty of summer moonlight; the picturesque cheerfulness of hay-harvest; the enjoyment of rich mountain scenery; rambling amongst the brightness of morning dews, along valleys, past the outstretched feet of heathy hills; lying on some moorland slope conscious of all the singular hush and glow of noon; watching all the varying lights and hues, listening to the varied sounds of evening in glens, now basking in the yellow calm sunshine, now deep in gloom; amid towering crags, by the dash of waters, or on some airy ridge that catches the last glow of heaven, taking in a vast stretch of scenes that defy alike the power of pen and pencil.

> Ah! slowly sink
> Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!
> Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
> Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
> Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
> And kindle, thou blue ocean! So my friend
> Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
> Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
> On the wild landscape, gaze till all doth seem
> Less gross than bodily; a living thing
> Which acts upon the mind, and with such hues
> As clothe the Almighty Spirit, when he makes
> Spirits perceive his presence!
>
> *Coleridge.*

And then the corn-harvest with all its happy human groups, and rich colours; the calm, steady splendour of autumn days; the deepening silence of the decaying year, its returning storms, and pictorial tints; the

very gloom and awfulness with which the year retreats, sending the spirit inwards. In all these scenes and changes, the soul of the lover of Nature luxuriates; and even finds beauty and strength in the stern visitations of winter. He goes with Nature in all her rounds, and rejoices with her in all. There needs for him no great event, no combination of stirring circumstances; it is not even necessary to him that he be poet, or painter, or sportsman; if he have not the skill, or faculty of any, he has the spirit of all. For him, there are spread out in earth and heaven pictures such as never graced the galleries of art. He sees splendours, and scenes painted by the hand of the Almighty, for whose faintest imitations the connoisseur would pay the price of an estate. To him every landscape presents beauty; to him every gale breathes pleasure; and every change of scene or season is a new unfolding of enjoyment. He knows nothing of the heart-burnings and jealousies which infest crowded places. He is not saddened by the sight of wickedness, or the experience of ingratitude and deceit. He is exempt from the *ennui* of polished society; the sneers of its unkindly criticism; and the hollowness of its professions. He converses with the Great Spirit which lives through the universe, and fills the hearts that open to its influence, with purity, humanity, the sweetest sympathies, the most holy desires; and overshadows them with that profound peace and that inward satisfaction, which are themselves the most substantial happiness.

That these are no vain imaginations, but positive realities scattered abroad for universal acceptance as much as the blessings of air and sunshine, we have

only to open the works of our best writers to be convinced of;—to see how the expression of their happiness breaks from them continually. It is this overflowing and irrepressible gladness of a heart resting on nature which gives such a charm to the writings of White and Evelyn, and good old Izaak Walton. And the poets—they are full of it. Listen to them, and then consider the nobility of their views, and the lofty purity of their souls, and then admit the power and depth of that influence which lives in nature and speaks in Christianity.

> So shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language which thy God
> Utters; who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself.
> Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,—
> Whether the summer clothe the genial earth
> With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
> Betwixt the tufts of snow in the bare branch
> Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
> Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall,
> Heard only in the traces of the blast;
> Or if the secret ministry of frost
> Shall hang them up in silent icicles
> Quietly shining to the quiet moon. *Coleridge.*

And for the cordial, substantial, heart-filling contentment which is gathered from the quietness of rural life, hear what Sir Henry Wotton, a most accomplished man, who had seen much of court life, both at home and abroad, says,

> Would the world now adopt me for her heir;
> Would beauty's queen entitle me the fair;
> Fame speak me Fortune's minion; could I vie
> Angels* with India; with a speaking eye,

* Piece of money value ten shillings.

Command bare heads, bowed knees; strike justice dumb,
As well as blind and lame; or give a tongue
To stones by epitaphs; be called "great master"
In the loose rhymes of every poetaster—
Could I be more than any man that lives,
Great, fair, rich, wise, all in superlatives;
Yet I more freely would these gifts resign,
Than ever fortune would have made them mine;
And hold one minute of this holy leisure
Beyond the riches of this empty pleasure.

Welcome pure thoughts; welcome ye silent groves;
These guests, these courts my soul most dearly loves.
Now the winged people of the sky shall sing
My cheerful anthems to the gladsome spring;
A prayer-book now shall be my looking-glass,
In which I will adore sweet virtue's face.
Here dwell no hateful looks, no palace cares,
No broken vows dwell here, nor pale-faced fears;
Then here I'll sit, and sigh my hot love's folly,
And learn to affect a holy melancholy:
And if contentment be a stranger then,
I'll ne'er look for it but in heaven again.

Such are the pleasures that lie in the path of the lover of the country; pleasures like the blessings of the Gospel, to be had without money, and without price. There are many, no doubt, who will deem them dull and insignificant; but the peace which they bring "passeth understanding," and we can make a triumphant appeal from the frivolous and the dissipated, to the wise and noble of every country and age.

CHAPTER XV.

LINGERING CUSTOMS.

> Many precious rites
> And customs of our rural ancestry
> Are gone, or stealing from us.
> *Wordsworth.*

How rapidly is the fashion of the ancient rural life of England disappearing! Every one who lived in the country in his youth, and looks back to that period now, feels how much is lost! How many of the beautiful old customs, the hearty old customs, the poetical old customs are gone! Modern ambition, modern wealth, modern notions of social proprieties, modern education, are all hewing at the root of the poetical and picturesque, the simple and cordial in rural life; and what are they substituting in their stead? We will endeavour, anon, to shew what they are doing, and what they are leaving undone; just now let us try to seize on the fluttering apparition of primitive custom, and bid it a hearty good-bye, before it is gone for ever. I have, in another place,

shown how all the more fanciful and refined of our village festal habits have vanished. The May-day dances, and gathering of May-branches—the scattering of flowers on holiday occasions in village streets, and about our houses. Even the planting of flowers about the graves in our village churchyards, once so common in England, is now rarely to be seen. Camden in his Britannia, and John Evelyn, mention that it was the custom of their times in Surrey, but who in Surrey sees anything of the kind now? You may meet with a solitary shrub, or with graves bound down with withes and briars; but nothing of that general planting of flowering shrubs which you see in Wales. It is the fate of champaign countries, to have their rustic customs sooner obliterated than those of mountain regions. The Scotch still retain their penny-weddings and Halloweens, the Welsh their regular wedding customs, and funeral customs as singular; but how wonderfully have the simple customs on these occasions of our English hamlets dwindled in our days! Washington Irving, in an interesting paper in the Sketch-Book, speaks of a practice in some villages of hanging up in the churches at the funeral of a maiden, gloves and garlands cut in paper. In what church is that done now-a-days? And yet, though I never saw a funeral in which so beautiful and appropriate a practice was retained, I well recollect seeing those gloves and garlands hanging in the church of my native village in Derbyshire; and I have heard my mother say, that in her younger days she has helped to cut and prepare them for the funeral of young women of the place. The garlands were originally of actual flowers—lilies and roses—and the

gloves of white kid. For these had become substituted simple white paper. There was a garland then, of imitative roses and lilies wreathed round a bow of peeled willow—a pair of gloves cut in paper, and a white handkerchief of the same material on which was written some texts of Scripture, or some stanzas of poetry applicable to the occasion, and to the hope of immortality in the deceased; and these were not unfrequently chosen for the purpose by the dying maiden herself. These emblems of purity and evanescent youth were laid on the coffin during the funeral procession, as the sword and cap of the soldier on his, and were then suspended in the body of the church; and there hung, till they fell through time, or till all who had an interest in the deceased were dead or departed. In all the village churches into which I have been in various parts of the kingdom, I do not recollect seeing any of those maiden trophies, except in this one: and they, on the coming of a new incumbent, were removed in a general church-cleaning many years ago.

And yet, where is it that our old customs, and the impress of past times and generations, linger so strongly as about our village churches in England! Entering one of them in some retired district on a Sunday, you seem to step back into a past age. The quaint old place—its rude and ancient pillars and arches—its oaken pews and pulpit, grown almost black with years; the massy font, the grim, grotesque human heads for corbels, every one differing from the other, where the mason seems to have indulged his humorous fancy without regard to the sacred character of the house in which they were to figure—the contrast-

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ing, though often faded splendour of the squire's pew; the heavy tombs with procumbent effigies of knight and dame—the mural tablets to the memory of departed rectors; the hatchment in sign of some once-important personage gone to his long home—and the half-worn stones on which you tread,

> Where many a holy text around is strewn,
> To teach the rustic moralist to die.

And then, the simple congregation! All in their best attire, in cut and texture guiltless of modern fashion: the clergyman, who with the air of a gentleman, has probably caught somewhat of the Doric air of the region; and the old clerk with his long coat, and long hair combed over his shoulders, doling out his responses with a peculiar twang, to which an ancient parish clerk can only attain. Then the little music-loft with its musicians, consisting of a bass-viol, a bassoon and hautboy, and the whole congregation singing with all their heart and soul. These are remnants of antiquity that are nowhere else to be found. There is a paper in Blackwood's Magazine for April of this year, called "Church Music and other Parochials," which gives you a picture of things which everybody who has gone to a thoroughly old-fashioned country church has seen over and over. The old clerk, the writer says, always reads Cheberims and Sepherims, and most unequivocally—"I am a Lion to my mother's children," and truly he sometimes looks not unlike one: and when told by the clergyman that he must take him to task to teach him to read and give the responses differently, he replies—"Why, sir, if I must read just like you, there wouldn't be a bit of difference between us."

Such is the peculiar elocution of the true old parish clerk that even a dog is sensible of it. I wandered into a rustic church where I accidentally saw the congregation collecting, having at my heels a little favourite spaniel. The church stood in the middle of a field at some distance from the hamlet, and I did not see where to secure the dog during the service; I therefore trusted to his general good behaviour, and made him lie down under the seat. Here he slept very quietly for some time; but at the very first sound of the clerk's voice, which was of the genuine traditional tone, up he jumped and began to bark most vociferously. I kicked him with my heel; menaced him with look and hand; set my foot on him—held his mouth—but all was in vain. While the clergyman, who, I must confess shewed great forbearance, perceiving that I was a stranger, and who moreover betrayed by a suppressed smile that he also perceived the true cause of the dog's irritation, was reading the lessons, the dog was perfectly still; again the clerk said "amen," and again up started Fido and barked as loud as ever. The case was hopeless—nothing remained but to retire.

In some of these rustic temples you sometimes see things that would electrify a city audience with surprise. I once saw a venerable clergyman on the edge of Yorkshire perpetrate a pun in the midst of the service with all gravity. As he was reading the morning lessons, a fellow who had probably been a little elated over-night, or not *im*probably the same morning, suddenly cried out—"Arise and shine!"—The rector paused and said, "Who was that?" "It was Joseph Twigg, sir," responded some one. "Then

Twig him out!" rejoined the rector as glibly and yet as gravely as possible. A smile, and indeed a general display of open mouths and grinning teeth appeared in his congregation—but Joseph Twigg was twigged out, and the rector went on.

Around these old buildings cling all the ancient superstitions. They are as much haunted as ever. They are as prolific of stories of ghosts and apparitions as ever. There are yet young people who go and watch in those old porches on St. Mark's eve to see whom they shall marry, and will sow hempseed backward at midnight round the whole church for the same purpose. In many parts of the country none will be buried on the north side of the church; and accordingly that side of the churchyard is commonly one unbroken level of greensward, although all the rest be crowded to excess with graves. The north-side of the church, by immemorial custom is the allotted portion of the suicide and the outcast. Accordingly in many churchyards that part is purposely very small. It is in many so little visited that it is a wilderness, grown in summer breast-high with mallows, nettles, chervil, elder bushes,

Hemlocks and darnels dank.

The writer of the article in Blackwood's Magazine just mentioned says, "I have often tried to make out the exact ideas the poor people have of angels—for they talk a great deal about them. The best that I can make of it is, that they are children, or children's heads and shoulders winged, as represented in church paintings, and in plaster-of-Paris on ceilings. We have a goodly row of them all the length of one ceil-

ing, and it cost the parish, or rather the then minister I believe, who indulged them, no trifle to have the eyes blacked, and nostrils, and a touch of light red in the cheeks. It is notorious and scriptural, they think, that the *body* dies, but nothing being said about the head and shoulders, they have a sort of belief that they are preserved to angels—which are no other than dead young children." There is no doubt that nearly all the idea which many country people possess of cherubims and angels is derived from these plaster heads, or from those cherubims with full-blown cheeks and gilded wings, and those gilded angels with long trumpets depicted on grave-stones. Ministers preach about angels and spirits as things which everybody comprehends, but which they have no actual conception of only as they see them represented by the chisels and gold-leaf of country masons; and the story of the country fellow who had shot an owl, and was thus accosted by his wife—"Don't thee know what thee hast done? Why, thee hast killed one of ar parson's cherabums!" is not so *outré* as it might appear to many.

But we must leave these superstitions to the winter fireside of the hamlet. More of the old customs connected with funerals than with any other events, remain in primitive districts. In Derbyshire, when the body is laid out, the nurse who attended the deceased, and has performed this last office, goes round to "bid to the berrin" (funeral). The names of the parties to be invited are given to her, and away she trudges from house to house, over hill and dale, sometimes to a considerable distance. She delivers her message, and names the day and hour. Refreshments

are forthwith set before her. However she may protest that she wants nothing—can eat nothing, out come, at least, the sweet loaf, and currant or ginger wine. The family gathers round as she sits, to hear all particulars of the illness; how it came on; what doctor was employed; all the progress of the complaint; which leads probably to whole histories of similar illnesses which *they* have known,—all the sayings of the deceased; the end he made, which is generally described by saying, "he died like a lamb!"—"What sort of a corpse is it?" which generally is answered by the information that "he looks just like himself for all the world—with a most heavenly smile on his countenance." All these matters are drunk in with great interest, and with many solemn wishes that they may all make as comfortable an end. Some trifle, sixpence or thereabout, is given to the nurse, and on she trudges to the next place. There is no doubt but that the death of an individual in one of these rustic places is felt ten times as much by his acquaintance as that of a citizen by his. The bustle of persons and events in city life so break down the force of the event, and so much sooner elbow it out of mind. In the country the moment a passing bell is heard to toll, you see every individual all attention; every one cries "hush." They stand in the attitude of profound listeners. The bell, by some signals which they all understand, proclaims to them the sex, and married or single state of the deceased, and then counts out his or her age.* Having ascertained these particulars,

* The fourme of the Trinity was founden in manne, that was Adam our forefadir, of earth oon personne; and Eve, of Adam, the secunde persone; and of them both was the third persone. At the

they begin to speculate, for they already know every body that is ill in the parish, and thus generally discover pretty certainly before any other intelligence reaches them whose bell it is. That bell is sufficient text for the discourse of the day. They run over all the biography of the individual, and bring up many an anecdote of him and his cotemporaries, which had long slept in their minds. When those invited to the funeral arrive, a substantial meal is often given, followed by wine and cake: and besides the customary distribution of scarfs, hatbands and gloves, a packet of sponge-cake made on purpose, of a prescriptive size and shape, and called "berrin-cake," is delivered to every one before the setting out of the funeral, to take home with him, wrapped in fine writing paper, and sealed with black wax. Nothing can be more solemn than the behaviour of all the spectators as the train passes along the road, all passengers stopping till the funeral is gone by; all taking off their hats, and watching its onward course in silence. In some places the old custom of chanting a psalm as they proceed towards the church-yard is still kept up, and nothing can be more impressive than the effect of that chant, as it comes mingled with the solemn tolling of the bell over some neighbouring hill, or along a quiet valley of a summer's evening. When the train reaches the church-yard gate, it halts, and if the clergyman be not ready to receive it, the coffin is sometimes set down upon trestles or chairs, and the company

deth of a manne three bellis shulde be ronge, as his knyll, in worscheppe of the Trinetie; and for a womanne, who was the secunde persone of the Trinetee, two bellis should be rungen.

Ancient Homily.

waits till the clergyman appears. It seems to be looked upon as an established mark of respect for the clergyman to meet the funeral at the gate, and it is beautiful to see the serious and unhurried manner in which the country clergyman of the more pure and primitive districts goes forth to receive the dead to its resting-place, repeating aloud as he precedes the funeral to the church, a portion of the service for the occasion.

The funeral of the young in the country has something particularly sritking in it—the coffin being borne by six of the deceased's own age. That of a young girl is more particularly so—the coffin being covered with a white pall, the six bearers being dressed in white, with white hoods, the chief mourners in black with black hoods.

Nothing can, in fact, be more widely different in feeling and effect than town and country funerals. In town a strange corpse passes along, amid thousands of strangers, and human nature seems shorn of that interest which it ought, especially in its last stage, to possess. In the country, every man, woman, and child goes down to the dust amid those who have known them from their youth, and all miss them from their place. Nature seems in its silence to sympathise with the mourners. The green mound of the rural churchyard opens to receive the slumberer to a peaceful resting-place, and the yews or lindens which he climbed when a boy in pursuit of bird's-nest, moth, or cockchaffer, overshadow, as it were, with a kindred feeling his grave.

There is one good custom which the present age has rapidly obliterated—that of leaving open the

country churchyard. In towns, there is perhaps less attraction to a church-yard in the mass of strange corpses which are there congregated, and the wilderness of bare flags which cover them; and there may be more cause for the vigilant prevention of the violation of the sanctity and decorum of the spot. But why must the country church-yard be shut up? Why should that generally picturesque and quiet place be prohibited to the stranger or the mourner? Some of the church-yards in these kingdoms are amongst the most romantic and lovely spots within them. What ancient, quiet, delicious spots have I seen of this kind amongst our mountains, and upon our coasts! What prospects landward, and seaward, do some of them give! How sweetly lies the rustic parsonage often along their side; its shrubbery lawn scarcely separated from the sacred ground. Why should these be closed? "There have been depredations," say the authorities. Then let the beadle see to it; let the offenders be punished; let the parish school and the minister teach better manners; but let these haunts of the sad or the meditative, be open to our feet as they were to those of our fathers. I must confess that I strongly sympathise with my brother, Richard Howitt, in the feelings expressed in Tait's Magazine, for June 1836. "The yew trees, which adorned, with a solemn gracefulness, the church-yard of my native place, are cut down; the foot-paths across it are closed; the walls are raised; for stiles, there are gates locked, and topped with iron spikes. A wider barrier than death is interposed betwixt the living and the dead. I must confess that I like it not. Why should man destroy the sanctities of time and nature? Beautiful is the picture drawn by Crabbe:—

Yes! there are real mourners. I have seen
A fair, sad girl, mild, suffering, and serene;
Attention through the day her duties claimed,
And to be useful as resigned she aimed.
Neatly she dressed, nor vainly seemed to expect
Pity for grief, or pardon for neglect;
But when her wearied parents sank to sleep,
She sought her place to meditate and weep.

* * * * * *

She placed a decent stone his grave above,
Neatly engraved—an offering of her love:
For that she wrought, for that forsook her bed,
Awake alike to duty and the dead.

* * * * * *

Here will she come, and on the grave will sit,
Folding her arms in long abstracted fit;
But if observer pass, will take her round,
And careless seem, for she would not be found.

"Where is now the free and uninterrupted admission for such mourners? Grief is a retiring creature, who 'would not be found,' and will not knock at the door of the constituted authorities for the keys: she will look lingeringly at the impassable barriers and retire. Easy of access were churchyards until lately, with their pleasant footpaths, lying, with the tranquillity of moonlight, in the bosom of towns and villages; old, simple, and venerable,—trodden, it may be, too frequently by unthinking feet—but able at all times to impress a feeling of sacredness—fraught as they were with the solemnities of life and death—on bosoms not over religious; and now, to a fanciful view, they seem more the prisons than the resting-places of the dead."

We have said that we will look at what education and other causes are doing, and what they are leaving undone in the change of character which they are effecting in the rural population. It appears by the Reports of the Poor-Law and Charity Commissioners that education progresses more in the northern and manufacturing districts than in the southern and agricultural ones. This is, no doubt, very much the case; and what education is leaving undone in these districts is, that it acts too timidly, too much in the spirit of worldly wisdom. It is afraid of making the people too intellectual; of raising their tastes, lest it should spoil them as Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water. My own experience is, that this is a grand mistake: that you cannot give them too pure and lofty a standard of taste; and that, especially, our best and noblest poets, as Milton, Shakspeare, Wordsworth, Cowper, Southey, Campbell, Burns, Bloomfield, etc. should be put into their hands, and particularly into those of the agricultural population. What can be so rational as to imbue the minds of those who are to spend their lives in the fields with all those associations which render the country doubly delightful? It is amazing what avidity they evince for such writers when they are once made familiar with them; and whoever has his mind well stored with the pure and noble sentiments of such writers, will never condescend to debase his nature by theft, idleness, and low habits. The great alarm has always been that of lifting the poor by such knowledge above their occupations, and filling their heads with airy notions. I can only point again to the agricultural population of Scotland, where such knowledge abounds.

If the labourers have not the genius of Burns, many of them have a great portion of the manly and happy feeling with which

> He walked in glory and in joy,
> Following his plough along the mountain side.

There is every reason, so far as experiment goes, to suppose that the same effect would follow in England. Where are there men so sober and industrious as those artizans who are now the steadiest frequenters of Mechanics' Libraries? I have given, in the first chapter of the Nooks of the World, a striking instance of the effects of such reading on an agricultural labourer. Through my instigation several intelligent families have made themselves acquainted with this meritorious man, and speak with admiration of his manly and superior character. Let the experiment be repeated far and wide!

But education itself yet wants introducing to a vast extent into the agricultural districts. The commissioners give a deplorable picture of the neglect of the agricultural population in the counties bordering on the metropolis. In some parts of Essex, Sussex, Kent, Buckinghamshire, Berks, etc., schools of any descriptions are unknown; in others not more than one in fifteen of the labourers are represented as able to read. In this county, Surrey, much the same state of things exists. I have been astounded at the very few labourers that you meet with that can read; and I think I see some striking causes for this neglect of the labouring class in the peculiar state of society here—it has no middle link. A vast number of the aristocracy reside in the county from its proximity to town; and besides these, there are only the farmers

and their labourers; the servants of the aristocratic establishments—a numerous and very peculiar class; and the few tradesmen who supply the great houses. The many gradations of rank and property which are found in more trading, manufacturing, and mixed districts do not here exist. It seems as if the Normans and the Saxons had here descended from age to age; two races, distinct in their habits as their condition, and with no one principle of amalgamation. The aristocracy shut themselves up in their houses and parks, and are rarely seen beyond them except in their carriages, driving rapidly to town, or to each other's isolated abodes. They know nothing and therefore can feel nothing for the toiling class. The effect is visible enough. The working classes grow up with the sense that they are regarded only as necessary implements of agriculture by the aristocracy —and they are churlish and uncouth. They have not the kindliness, and openness of countenance and manner that the peasantry of more socially favourable districts have. The farmers too, seem little to employ them as house-servants, fed at their own table. You do not hear of those jolly harvest-suppers, which you may still find in many old-fashioned places, where master and man feast and rejoice together over the in-gathered plenty. So far as downright rusticity goes, there is as much of that within a dozen miles of London as in the farthest county of England; but the peasants seem to have lost much of the sentiment which those of more distant counties possess. They have their wakes and fairs on their extensive commons and greens, and leap in bags, and have wheel-barrow races, and races of women for certain articles of female

apparel, gipsies with their lucky-bags and will-pegs; but as to anything of a poetical cast, I do not see it. What a fall from the funeral train going chanting a psalm on its way to the churchyard, to one which I saw the other day in this neighbourhood. The coffin was laid on a cart and secured with ropes; one shaggy horse went jostling it along; another cart followed, occupied by the chief mourners, half a dozen of them huddled together, and the rest succeeded on foot, in a rude and straggling company.

In many villages I see no church at all; and where they are seen, how different to the fine old churches of most parts of England. As you cast your eyes over a wide landscape, you look in vain for those tall taper spires and massy towers which rise here and there in most English scenery; and find perhaps somewhere a solitary little erection resembling a little wooden dovecote. The piety of these parts never expended itself much in church-building. The villages themselves are often very picturesque. They are frequently scattered along extensive commons, amidst abundant woods and grey heaths; generally buried in their old orchards, and built with many pictorial angles and projections; often thatched, and consisting of old framed timber-work, or wood altogether, with gardens full of flowers, and goodly rows of bee-hives. Vines run luxuriantly over their very roofs, and in autumn hang with a prodigality of grapes; and as to the country itself nothing can be more pastorally and sylvanly sweet than this county. Its grey heaths and pine woods, in one part, remind you of Scotland —its commons, in others, covered with the greenest turf and scattered with oaks, have the appearance of

old forests; and wherever you go, you get glimpses into fine woodland valleys, and of old solitary halls standing far off in the midst of them; grey farm houses; old water-mills; the most rustic huts; some pastoral stream like the Mole, which goes wandering about through this scenery, fringed with its flags and meadow-sweet, and with its bull-rushes bending in its copious stream, as if it were loath to leave it; in short it is a region full of the spirit of the poetry of Keats, —a region lying as it might lie

> ——————— Before the faëry broods
> Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods;
> Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
> Sceptre and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
> Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
> From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslipped lawns,—
> From beechen groves, and shadows numberless.

But the people themselves seem lost in their umbrageous hamlets, and on their commons, unthought of. There is the village of Oxshott, some three miles hence.—Go through it on a Sunday, when the agricultural people are all at leisure, and there they are as thick as motes in the sun, in the middle of the village street. There appears to be no church, nor any inhabitants but farmers and labourers. Boys, girls, men and women, all seem to be out of doors, and all in their every-day garbs. The colour of tawny soiled slops and straw-hats gives, as a painter would say, the prevailing tint to the scene. The boys are busy enough playing at ball, or cricket. The men seem to pass their time sitting on banks and stiles, or gossiping and smoking in groups. Scarcely a soul will move out of the way to let you pass on. The intel-

lectual condition of this obscure hamlet is strikingly indicated to every passer through, by a large school-house bearing on its front, cut in stone, this proud title —"THE ROYAL KENT SCHOOL, founded in 1820;"— but which has been since so far *con*founded, that its windows are broken to atoms, and it is at once recent and in ruins! This state of things should not be suffered to continue. The vast wealth of the aristocracy living hereabout, and the ignorance around them, very ill accord. Amongst the affluent families in the county there are, no doubt, many who would be anxious to secure an education to the rural children, *if they actually knew that it was needed!* In the village of Esher this has recently been done: let us hope that other places will "go and do likewise." *

Since writing the above, I have met with the following statements, in Mr. Frederick Hill's excellent work on National Education. They are in his account of Mr. William Allen's School of Industry at Lindfield, in Sussex; and are, at once, most confirmatory of the view I have taken of the state of things in this county, and of the remedy to be applied. To the benevolent and wealthy landed proprietors they are full of encouragement.

"We visited the school at Lindfield, in July 1831, and it had then been established several years. Before fixing on the spot where to build his school, Mr. Allen sent an intelligent young man on a tour through the

* I am told by intelligent people, who have spent the greater part of their lives here, that the farmers are particularly jealous of the peasantry receiving any education,—they conceive it would spoil them as beasts of burden. This shews what is the deplorable ignorance of *this* class too, of the rural population.

county, to find out where a school was most wanted. After a diligent search, Lindfield was pitched upon as the centre of a district in which the peasantry were in a very low state of ignorance. Lindfield is on the road from London to Brighton; distant from London about thirty-seven miles, from Brighton fifteen.

"Not only did Mr. Allen receive no assistance in building his school, but most of the wealthy inhabitants endeavoured to thwart him; while among the peasantry themselves, the most preposterous stories were afloat respecting his designs. These poor people had been so little accustomed to see persons act from other than selfish motives, that they could not believe it possible that any one would come and erect a large building, at great cost and trouble to himself, merely from a desire of promoting their good. They felt sure that all this outlay was not without some secret object; and at last they explained all, much to their own satisfaction, by referring it to the following notable project.—The building was to be applied to the diabolical purpose of kidnapping children; a high palisade was to be thrown up all round it, and other measures taken to prevent entrance or escape. Then the school was to be opened, and everything carried on smoothly, and with great appearance of kind and gentle treatment, until such a number of children had been collected as would satisfy the rapacious desires of the wretches who had hatched the wicked scheme; when all at once the gates were to be closed upon them, and the poor innocents shipped off to some distant land!

"Greatly indeed must a school have been wanted where such unheard-of absurdity could circulate and

obtain credence. At length the building, a most substantial and commodious one, was completed, though few indeed were those who at once ventured within the dreaded bounds. However, by dint of perseverance, this number was gradually increased. The few children who did come, began in a short time to take home with them sundry pence, which they had earned in plaiting straw, making baskets, etc.; arts they were learning at school. The boys began to patch their clothes and mend their shoes, without their parents having a penny to pay for the work. Meanwhile there came no authentic accounts of ships lying in wait on the neighbouring coast, nor had even the dreaded iron palisades raised their pointed heads. Little by little, the poor ignorant creatures became assured that there was nothing to fear, but, on the contrary, much practical good to be derived from sending their children to the school; and that strange and incredible as it might seem, the London 'gemman' was really come among them as a friend and benefactor. A breach being thus fairly made in the mud-bank of prejudice, it was not long before the whole mass gave way. In short, the scheme proved so completely successful, that at the time we visited the school, almost every child whose parents lived within a distance of three miles, was entered as a pupil, the total number on the list being no less than 300. The children are at school eight hours each day; three being employed in manual labour, and five in the ordinary school exercises. There is a provision for a diversity of tastes in the classes of industry; indeed the most unbounded liberality is manifest in all the arrangements. Some are employed as shoe-

makers, others as tailors, and others again, at platting, basket-making, weaving, printing, gardening, or farming. The children work very cheerfully, and are found to like the classes of industry better than the school.

"The first employment to which the little workers are put is platting straw. When they are *au fait* at this, which is generally at the end of a few months, they are promoted to some other craft; the one of highest dignity being that of printer. Before leaving school the child will become tolerably expert at three or four trades. Those who work on the farm have each the sole care of a plot of ground, measuring one-eighth part of an acre, and each is required to do his own digging, sowing, manuring, and reaping. An intelligent husbandman, however, is always on the ground, to teach those who are at fault. The plots of land were all clean and in nice order; and from the variety of produce, oats, turnips, mangel-wurzel, potatoes, and cabbages, the whole had a curious and amusing appearance, reminding one of the quilted counterpanes of former years. We found the system of *matayer* rent in use; each boy being allowed one half of the produce for himself, the other half being paid for the use of the land, the wear and tear of tools, etc. One lad, twelve years old, had in this way received no less a sum than twenty-three shillings and sixpence, as his share of the crop of the preceding year; and we were told that such earnings were by no means uncommon."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

She smiles, including in her wide embrace
City, and town, and tower, and sea with ships
Sprinkled; be our companion while we track
Her rivers populous with gliding life;
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods;
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade,
In peace and meditative cheerfulness.

Wordsworth.

We have now taken a comprehensive view of the rural life of England; of the mode in which "gentle and simple," rich and poor, pass their life in the

country; of the sports, the pastimes, the labours and various pursuits which fill up the round of rural existence; of the charms and advantages which there await the lovers of peace, of poetry, of natural beauty, and of pure thoughts: and I think it must be confessed that though other countries may boast a more brilliant climate, none can offer a more varied and attractive beauty; other modes of life may be more exciting, but none can be more calmly delightful, none more conducive to a healthful and manly spirit.

The more we see of our own country, the more do we love it; and it is for this reason, that in closing these volumes, I cannot take leave of my readers without advising them to do as I have done,—see as much of it as they can. There is no part of it but is filled with some high historical or literary association: it is the land where brave men have contended and poets sung, and philosophers and politicians have meditated works and measures, of which the world is now reaping the honour and enjoyment; there is no part of it but has some trace of those manners and dialects which belong to the living of a thousand years ago, and therefore are most interesting motives to our tracing back the stream of time and beholding the growth of our country's fortunes from age to age; there is no part of it, but has its swarming cities, or its fields smiling like a garden beneath the triumphant effect of British tillage,—or its wild hills and forests, that, untouched by the plough, are left to be fruitful of free thoughts, of poetic feelings, of picturesque beauty and magnificence, of health to the hearts and spirits of our countrymen and countrywomen, neces-

sary to generate those high thoughts and maintain those endeavours that shall yet lead noble England to the height of its destined honour.

It is glorious, indeed, to visit the countries of ancient art and renown—Greece, Italy, Egypt, or sacred Palestine—my spirit kindles at the very mention of them,—yet whether it were my privilege or not to traverse those glorious regions, I should still wish to wander over every hill, and through every busy city of my native land. To me, I repeat, there is no part of this illustrious country but opens some new feeling of affection. As I pass over her plains, I am filled with admiration of that skill and indefatigable industry which have covered them with such affluence of cattle, such exuberant grass, such depths of waving corn; as I pass by her rural halls and hamlet abodes, I find myself perpetually on classic ground, amid the homes of poets and patriots; when I enter her cities, I am struck with all their busy and swarming children, with their endless manufactures; their institutions for rebutting human evils, and raising the human character; with rich men carrying on gigantic enterprises of commerce or national improvement, and poor men associating to ascertain and defend their rights. These are all animating objects of notice; and, I will tell those who may not hope to see much of foreign regions, that there is enough in merry England to fill the longest life with delight, go where they will. I would have those who are young and able, to take their knapsacks on their backs, and with a stick in their hand, they may find pleasures worth enjoying, go which way they will in these islands, though they do as many an adventurer has done, set up their staff

as an indicator, and march off in the direction in which it falls.*

What a summer's delight there lies in any one such progress. Suppose you took your route from the metropolis through the south and west. How delightful are the richly cultivated fields, the green hop-grounds, the hanging woods of Kent; how pleasant the heathy hills and scattered woodlands of Surrey; the thickly strown villas of the wealthy, the vine-covered cottages and village greens of the poor. Are not the flowery lanes and woody scenery of Berkshire, and the open downs of Wiltshire worth traversing? What a sweet sylvan retirement in the one; what an airy, wide-spreading amplitude of vision in the other! It were worth somewhat to read Miss Mitford's living sketches in her own sweet neighbourhood; it were worth a great deal more to meet Miss Mitford herself, as she lives amongst her simple neighbours, who know how much she is their friend, or amongst her wealthy and

* Jamais je n'ai tant pensé, tant existé, tant vécu, tant été moi, si j'ose ainsi dire, que dans ceux voyages que j'ai faits seul et à pied. La marche a quelque chose qui anime et avive mes idées; je ne puis presque penser quand je reste en place; il faut que mon corps soit en branle pour y mettre mon esprit. La vue de la campagne, la succession des aspects agréables, le grand air, le grand appétit, la bonne santé que je gagne en marchant, la liberté du cabaret, l'éloignement de tout ce qui me fait sentir ma dépendance, de tout ce qui me rappelle à ma situation, tout cela dégage mon âme, me donne une plus grande audace de penser, me jette en quelque sorte dans l'immensité des êtres pour les combiner, les choisir, me les approprier sans gêne et sans crainte. Je dispose en maître de la nature entière; mon cœur, errant d'objet en objet, s'unit, s'identifie à ceux qui le flattent, s'entoure d'images charmantes, s'enivre de sentiments délicieux. Si pour les fixer je m'amuse à les décrire en moi-même, quelle vigueur de pinceau, quelle fraîcheur de coloris, quelle énergie d'expression je leur donne! *Rousseau.*

educated ones, who know how much she deserves of their esteem and admiration. Would it be nothing to ramble amongst the ancient walls of Winchester, every spot of which is as thickly strown with historical recollections, as it is venerable in presence? Would it be nothing to climb those downs, and see around far-spreading greenness, sinking and swelling in the softest lines of beauty; and below, vales, stretching in different directions, contrasting their rich woodiness most strikingly with the bare solitudes of the down? To see the venerable cathedral lifting its hoary head from the vale, and numbers of subject churches shewing their humbler towers and spires all along the valleys; and catch the glitter of those streams which water those valleys, as they wind to the sun. I have trodden these downs and dales in summer weather with feelings of buoyant delight, that admit of no description. There is Stonehenge standing in the midst of Salisbury Plain, which is worth a long pilgrimage to see. To see! Yes, and to feel in all its lonely grandeur, with all its savage and mysterious antiquity upon it. It is a walk from Salisbury, that, on a spring or autumn day, with a congenial spirit, were enough to make that a life's pleasant memory. Ascend first from that truly old English city, along whose streets and past almost every door run living streams of most beautiful water from the sweet brimful Avon—to the ramparts of Old Sarum. What a stupendous work of antiquity you stand upon; what a scene lies all around you! How beautifully rises that noble cathedral above the subject city; how finely the magnificent spire above the fabric itself! And *en passant*, what a feature of fair and solemn dig-

nity is the cathedral in our English cities! As you approach them, and see afar off these noble monuments of past science towering aloft in sublime dignity, you are at once reminded that you are on classic ground; that you are about to enter a place where our ancestors worked out some portion of the national fame; and are thereby awakened from other thoughts to look about you for all that is worthy of notice. But that is but a passing tribute to the grave beauty of those glorious old piles—they deserve more; but other objects now call us on. See what green and watered valleys allure you forward. See where the downs stretch their solitary heads amid the clear and spiritual hues of the sky. And as you go on, the chime of flocks, and the discovery of sweet hamlets, and the voices of their children at play, and the tinkle of the plough-team bells, shall make you feel that the rural peace and delight of Old England are as strong in her heart as ever. For myself, the smallest peculiarity of rural fashions and habits in different parts of the country attracts my attention, and gives me a certain degree of pleasure. The sight of herds of swine grazing in the wide fields of Berkshire and Hampshire as orderly as sheep do, is what, at the first view gives an agreeable surprise to the man from the midland and northern counties, where it is never seen. The sight of the clematis, which flings its flowery masses over hedges, and copses; of myrtles, hydrangeas, fuchias, and other tender plants, blossoming in the gardens of the south: the appearance of different birds and insects, as the chough, the nightingale in greater frequency, the wood-lark sending its voice from the distant uplands; the large stag-beetle, and

other insects; these, and other things observed in one part of the island which are never met with in another, small matters though they be in themselves, all give a novel interest to some new spot, and some agreeable hour. Nay to me, I say, the very varying of rural costumes and implements, are objects of interest. Those odd ladders in Berkshire, stretching at the feet to a width of sometimes two yards, and then tapering up rapidly; as if Berkshire peasants could not stand on such ladders as all England beside stands on. The light wagons and carts in the south, so different from the heavy ones of the midland counties; and some of them so painted and adorned in front with large roses, and other flowers; and their teams, with bells at their bridles, and frames of bells over the leader's head, and barbaric top-knots on their heads, and scarlet fringes and tassels on their gears; and tails, all bound up with ribbons, and curious platting. The wagoners, each in his straw hat, and white slop, with

> His carter's-whip that on his shoulder rests,
> In air high towering with a boorish pomp,
> The sceptre of his sway.

Horses at plough, harnessed with a simple collar of straw, and a few ropes. Oxen with their heavy wooden yokes ploughing in one part of the country as primitively as they did in the days of Alfred, ay, or of King David; and shepherds with their crooks in another, shew to those who never saw them but in books, that some of our oldest practices still remain.

The various constructions of bill-hooks, shovels, and wheel-barrows which prevail in different quarters

of the island, contribute to the picturesque: from the clumsy rudiment of a barrow seen in Cornwall, which lies on the ground without legs, and the sides of which are cut out of two pieces of wood rudely tapering off into handles; through all the various shapes of that little vehicle, up to its most perfect one. The shovels used by the labourers in the West of England, with handles as tall as themselves, would make the men of the midland counties stare; and the billhook of those counties, with a back edge as well as a front one, would be equally strange to the chopsticks of Surrey and Sussex. The various modes of country employment, promote the same effect. The ploughman whistling after his team; the shepherds on the downs driving their white flocks before them like a rolling cloud, to evening fold or morning pasture; the dwellers on heaths and moors, paring the turf for fuel, or cutting from the peat-beds their black bricks, and piling their black pyramids on the waste. Every different district displays its peculiar employment. Durham and Northumberland exhibit their extensive and curious coal mines; Yorkshire and Lancashire their weaving and spinning; the hills of Derbyshire their lead mines; Nottingham and Leicester shires their coals again; Lincoln and Norfolk their vast corn farms; the Southern downs their shepherds; Devon and Cornwall their tin and copper mines; Gloucester and Somerset display their fields of teazles again, indicating that there our finest broad-cloths are made; Stafford and Warwick shires swarm with collieries, iron founderies, and potteries; and so on. Each district has its peculiar pursuit and occupation pointed out by nature, and all these things give variety to the

country and its inhabitants, and scatter everywhere interesting subjects of inquiry for the passer-by.

I say then, cross only the south of England, and how delightful were the route to him who has the love of nature and of his country in his heart; and no imperious cares to dispute it with them. Walk up, as I have said, from Salisbury to Stonehenge. Sit down amid that solemn circle, on one of its fallen stones:—contemplate the gigantic erection, reflect on its antiquity, and what England has passed through and become while those stones have stood there. Walk forth over that beautiful and immense plain,—see the green circles, and lines, and mounds, which ancient superstition or heroism have everywhere traced upon it, and which nature has beautified with a carpet of turf as fine and soft as velvet. Join those simple shepherds, and talk with them. Reflect, poetical as our poets have made the shepherd and his life,—what must be the monotony of that life in lowland counties —day after day, and month after month, and year after year,—never varying, except from the geniality of summer to winter; and what it must be then, how dreary its long reign of cold, and wet, and snow!

When you leave them, plunge into the New Forest in Hampshire. There is a region where a summer month might be whiled away as in a fairy-land. There, in the very heart of that old forest you find the spot where Rufus fell by the bolt of Tyrell, looking very much as it might look then. All around you lie forest and moorland for many a mile. The fallow and red deer in thousands herd there as of old. The squirrels gambol in the oaks above you; the swine rove in the thick fern and the deep glades of the

forest as in a state of nature. The dull tinkle of the cattle-bell comes through the wood; and ever and anon, as you wander forward, you catch the blue smoke of some hidden abode, curling over the tree tops; and come to sylvan bowers, and little bough-over-shadowed cottages, as primitive as any that the reign of the Conqueror himself could have shewn. What haunts are in these glades for poets: what streams flow through their bosky banks, to soothe at once the ear and eye enamoured of peace and beauty. What endless groupings and colourings for the painter. At Boldre you may find a spot worth seeing, for it is the parsonage once inhabited by the venerable William Gilpin, the descendant of Barnard Gilpin, the apostle of the north; the author of "Forest Scenery,"—and near it is the school, which he built and endowed for the poor from the sale of his drawings. Not very distant from this stands the rural dwelling of one of England's truest-hearted women, Caroline Bowles,—and not far off you have the woods of Nettley Abbey —the Isle of Wight, the Solent, and the open sea.

But still move on through the fair fields of Dorset and Somerset, to the enchanted land of Devon. If you want stern grandeur, follow its north-western coast; if peaceful beauty, look down into some one of its rich vales, green as an emerald and pastured by its herds of red cattle; if all the summer loveliness of woods and rivers, you may ascend the Tamar or the Tavy, or many another stream; or you may stroll on through valleys that for glorious solitudes, or fair English homes amid their woods and hills, shall leave you nothing to desire. If you want sternness and loneliness, you may pass into Dartmoor. There are

wastes and wilds, crags of granite, views into far off districts, and the sounds of waters hurrying away over their rocky beds, enough to satisfy the largest hungering and thirsting after poetical delight. I shall never forget the feelings of delicious entrancement with which I approached the outskirts of Dartmoor. I found myself amongst the woods near Haytor Crags. It was an autumn evening. The sun, near its setting, threw its yellow beams amongst the trees, and lit up the ruddy tors on the opposite side of the valley into a beautiful glow. Below, the deep dark river went sounding on its way with a melancholy music, and as I wound up the steep road all beneath the gnarled oaks, I ever and anon caught glimpses of the winding valley to the left, all beautiful with wild thickets and half shrouded faces of rock, and still on high these glowing ruddy tors standing in the blue air in their sublime silence. My road wound up, and up, the heather and the bilberry on either hand shewing me that cultivation had never disturbed the soil they grew in; and one sole woodlark from the far-ascending forest to the right, filled the wide solitude with his wild autumnal note. At that moment I reached an eminence, and at once saw the dark crags of Dartmoor high aloft before me, and one large solitary house in the valley beneath the woods. So fair, so silent, save for the woodlark's note and the moaning river, so unearthly did the whole scene seem—that my imagination delighted to look upon it as an enchanted land,—and to persuade itself that that house stood as it would stand for ages, under the spell of silence, but beyond the reach of death and change.

But even there you need not rest—there lies a land

of grey antiquity, of desolate beauty still before you—Cornwall. It is a land almost without a tree. That is, all its high and wild plains are destitute of them, and the bulk of its surface is of this character. Some sweet and sheltered vales it has, filled with noble wood, as that of Tresillian near Truro; but over a great portion of it extend grey heaths. It is a land where the wild furze seems never to have been rooted up, and where the huge masses of stone that lie about its hills and valleys are clad with the lichen of centuries. And yet how does this bare and barren land fasten on your imagination! It is a country that seems to have retained its ancient attachments longer than any other. The British tongue here lingered till lately—as the ruins of King Arthur's palace still crown the stormy steep of Tintagel; and the saints that succeeded the heroic race, seem to have left their names on almost every town and village.

It were well worth a journey there merely to see the vast mines which perforate the earth, and pass under the very sea; and the swarming population that they employ. It were a beautiful sight to see the bands of young maidens, that sit beneath long sheds, crushing the ore, and singing in chorus. But far more were it worth the trip to stand at the Land's-End, on that lofty, savage, and shattered coast, with the Atlantic roaring all round you. The Hebrides themselves, wild and desolate, and subject to obscuring mists as they are, never made me feel more shipped into a dream-land than that scenery. At one moment the sun shining over the calm sea, in whose transparent depths the tawny rocks were seen far down. Right and left extend the dun cliffs and cavernous

precipices, and at their feet the white billows playing gracefully to and fro over the nearly sunken rocks, as through the manes of huge sea-lions. At the next moment all wrapt in the thickest obscurity of mist; the sea only cognizable by its sound; the dun crags looming through the fog vast and awfully, and all round you on the land nothing visible, as you trace back your way, but huge grey stones that strew the whole earth. In the midst of such a scene I came to a little deserted hut, standing close by a solitary mere amongst the rocks, and the dreamy effect became most perfect. What a quick and beautiful contrast was it to this, as the very same night I pursued my way along the shore, the clear moon hanging on the distant horizon, the waves of the ocean on one hand coming up all luminous and breaking on the strand in billows of fire, and on the other hand the sloping turf sown with glow-worms for some miles, thick as the stars over-head.

I speak of the delight which a solitary man may gather up for ever from such excursions; that will come before him again and again in all their beauty from his past existence, into many a crowd and many a solitary room; but how much more may be reaped by a congenial band of affectionate spirits in such a course. To them, a thousand different incidents or odd adventures, flashes of wit and moments of enjoyment combine to quicken both their pleasures and friendship. The very flight from a shower, or the dining on a turnip-pie, no very uncommon dish in the rural inns of Cornwall, may furnish merriment for the future. And if this one route would be a delicious summer's ramble, with all its coasting and its sea-

ports into the bargain, how many such stretch themselves in every direction through England. The fair orchard-scenes of Hereford and Worcester, in spring all one region of bloom and fragrance,—the hills of Malvern and the Wrekin. The fairy dales of Derbyshire; the sweet forest and pastoral scenes of Staffordshire; the wild dales, the scars and tarns of Yorkshire; the equally beautiful valleys and hills of Lancashire, with all those quaint old halls that are scattered through it, memorials of past times, and all connected with some incident or other of English history. And then there is Northumberland—the classic ground of the ancient ballad—the country of the Percy—of Chevy Chace—of the Hermit of Warkworth—of Otterburn and Humbledown—of Flodden, and many another stirring scene. And besides all these are the mountain regions of Cumberland, of Wales, of Scotland, and Ireland, that by the power of steam, are being brought every day more within the reach of thousands. What an inexhaustible wealth of beauty lies in those regions! These, if every other portion of the kingdom were reduced by ploughing and manufacturing and steaming to the veriest common-place, these, in the immortal strength of their nature, bid defiance to the efforts of any antagonist, or reducing spirit. These will still remain wild and fair, the refuge and haunt of the painter and the poet—of all lovers of beauty, and breathers after quiet and freshness. Nothing can pull down their lofty and scathed heads; nothing can dry up those everlasting waters, that leap down their cliffs and run along their vales in gladness; nothing can certainly exterminate those dark heaths, and drain off those

mountain lakes, where health and liberty seem to dwell together; nothing can efface the loveliness of those regions, save the hand of Him who placed them there. I rejoice to think that while this great nation remains, whatever may be the magnitude of the designs for the good of the world in which Providence purposes to employ it,—however populous it may be necessary for it to become,—whatever the machinery and manufactories that may be needfully at work in it; that while Cumberland, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland continue, there will continue regions of indestructible beauty—of free and unpruned nature, so fair that those who are not satisfied therewith, would not be satisfied with the whole universe. More sublimity other countries may boast, more beauty has fallen to the lot of none on God's globe. And what a satisfaction it is, to see that our poetry of late years has awakened the public mind to a full sense of our natural advantages. It may be said that many traverse the continent who never see their own country, but it cannot be said that the beauty of our own fair islands is overlooked. On the contrary, every one who travels through them himself, sees how increasing are the numbers who do the same. To many a point of beauty and historic interest I have been, from the very Land's-End to John O'Groat's; and I do not know one spot of any claims to attention, which I did not find numerously visited from the earliest spring to late in the year. I once was at Loch Katrine early in April, and there were arrivals of several carriages a day. I was at the Land's-End late in October, and as I reached the Logan Rock, a very interesting party of young people were just coming away from it.

As I have said, I walked up to Stonehenge from Salisbury in order to enjoy it in all its solitude. This was late in the autumn; yet I found a large party there, and the shepherds assured me that every day, and all day long it would continue so till severe weather set in. When Dr. Johnson went as far as the Hebrides, it was reckoned a rare thing. In the summer of 1836 I visited Staffa and Iona in company with seventy persons; and all summer long, three or four times a-week, do those places see scarcely less than a hundred English people land upon them. Who indeed does not know how every pleasant place on our coasts, how the Peak of Derbyshire, how all Wales, the Highlands of Scotland and many parts of Ireland are annually thronged with people, who break away from towns and trade to refresh their spirits with the invigorating spirit of the mountains, and with the sights and sounds of ocean? Nay, such is the pressure of the tourist current, that wherever steam vessels reach in the mountain districts—it is one of the most ludicrous scenes imaginable to see a packet come to the pier, and its whole swarm of passengers leap ashore and proceed at full gallop to storm the inns for beds and accommodation. I have myself, as I believe I have before stated, been forced in the throng up to the very attics of one of these inns by the rush of people, who filled the whole stair-case, and indeed house, calling out for beds, while the poor landlady was wringing her hands in despair of reducing the clamorous chorus into some sort of order.

Ludicrous as this recital however is, the spirit which occasions it is an excellent one. It is full of health and good moral feeling. It is one which, if it goes on,

hand in hand with our machinery and our literature, must produce the happiest effects. I trust that these volumes will add their quota to that love of the country which I would desire to see possessing a corner of every human being's heart. While that is there, I am sure there must be an undecayed portion of the original heart of humanity,—a remnant at least, of that tone of spirit which makes heaven desirable, and which is capable of enjoying it. He that loves the country as God has made it, in all its varying beauty and immortal freshness, must love God and man too; and while he seeks in mountain solitudes and on sea shores, relief from the weariness of too long jostling in the crowd, will find with delight how this very solitude will quicken his appetite for human society, and his perception of the comforts and home-pleasures of towns. I declare, that when I have been for weeks roaming amongst forests and mountain wastes, I feel, on coming into a city, a sense of its life, activity, and social condition which was before become comparatively dim. As I have entered one in the early morning, and have seen the neat young housemaids, rubbing the knockers and cleaning down the steps of their masters' doors, and have caught glimpses, as I passed along, of well oil-clothed passages, and well carpeted rooms, and fires already burning cheerfully,—I have felt a sense of the comforts and pleasantness of English homes that I have rarely felt besides. Or at evening, as we pass where blinds are yet undrawn, and where fires are seen warmly illumining fair rooms, and happy faces are congregated around them, who has not felt the same thing?

But we must now close these volumes; and how can that be more fitly done than by ending as we began, and acknowledging with a rejoicing thankfulness, "that the lines have indeed fallen to us in pleasant places," in a land which it would be difficult to pronounce more blessed in its literature, its religious spirit, or in the splendid dowry of its natural beauty.

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